THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

+ REISSUES + BOOKS + FILMS + LIVE! THE RETURN!

MOJO

The Music Magazine

LIFE AFTER CHARLIE

THE ROLLING STONES

"ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN..."

140 REVIEWS
NEIL YOUNG. ABBA.
PAUL McCARTNEY.
DAVID BOWIE & MORE

2021

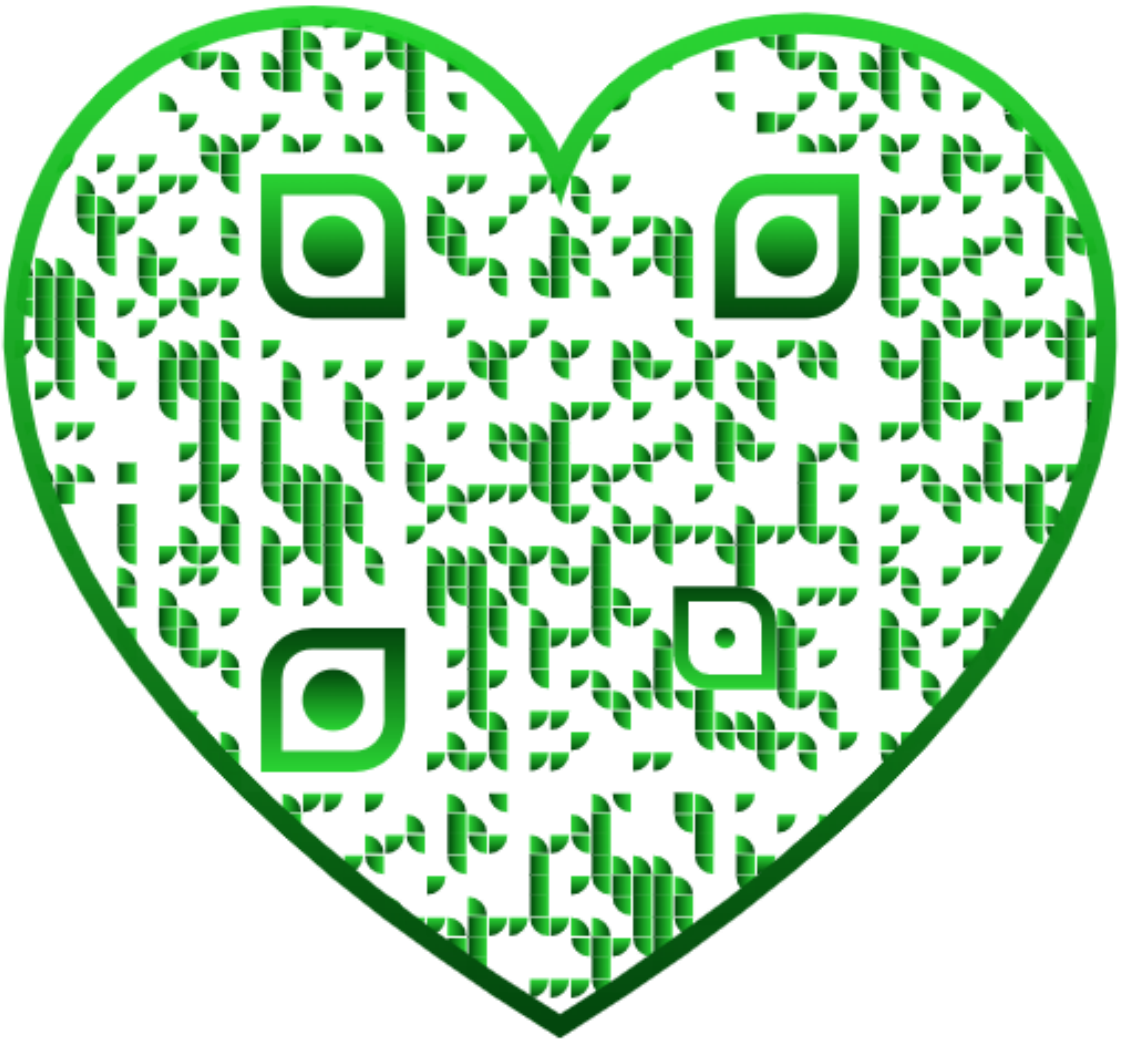
24-PAGE SPECIAL

STARRING!

ST. VINCENT
QUESTLOVE
WARREN ELLIS
SPIRITUALIZED
RICKIE LEE JONES
THE BEACH BOYS
THE WEATHER STATION
CAN & MORE

+

HOW TO READ BOB DYLAN!

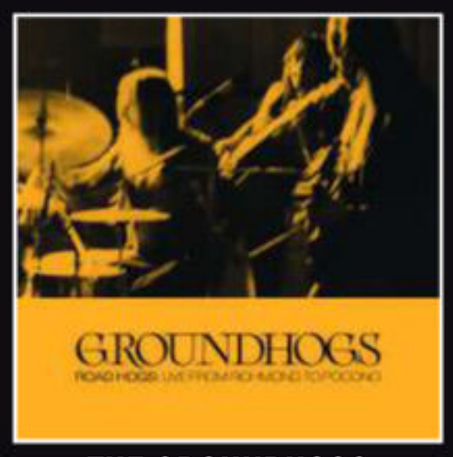


CARGO COLLECTIVE

CARGO RECORDS

THE JAZZ BUTCHER
DR CHOLMONDLEY REPENTS: A-SIDES, B-SIDES AND SEASIDES
FIRE RECORDS 4CD BOOK

A new four CD box set gathering A-sides, the would-be hits along with B-sides, tangential 12" tracks (the C-sides), and an excellent session for Los Angeles radio station KCRW from 1989.



THE GROUNDHOGS
ROADHOGS: LIVE FROM RICHMOND TO POCONO
FIRE RECORDS 3LP / 2CD

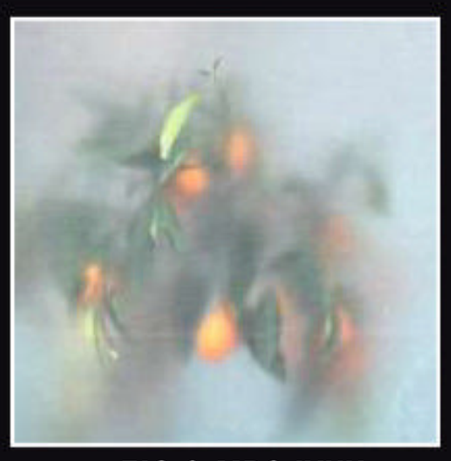
An essential rock artefact tracing The Groundhogs from their pre - 'Thank Christ For The Bomb' blues roots to the final live show for the classic line up.

FU MANCHU
A LOOK BACK:DOGTOWN & Z BOYS
AT THE DOJO 2LP / CD

2LP (3 Sided 1 Side Etched). Short documentary by legendary Glen E. Friedman. The film looks back on an essential period in the history of skateboarding, Fu Manchu provided the entire soundtrack for the film with the songs personally curated by Glen E. Friedman.

BERNIE MARSDEN
CHESS
CONQUEST CD

CHESS, the superb follow up to Bernie Marsden's UK top 20 selling album, KINGS. "The electric guitar was made for this".

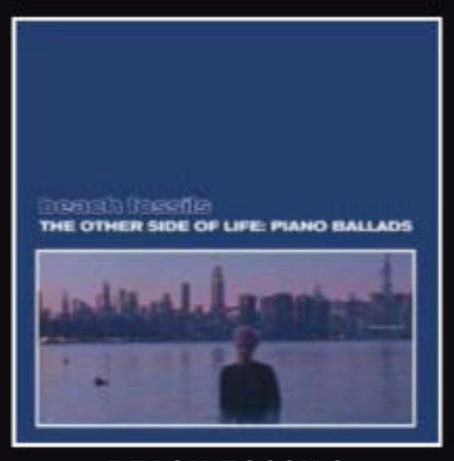


µ-ZIQ & MRS JYNX
SECRET GARDEN
PLANET MU LP / CD

In Spring 2021, Mike Paradinas (a.ka µ-Ziq) spoke to long time friend and past label signing Hannah Davidson (Mrs Jynx) about the therapeutic power of writing music when times are tough.

SIV DISA
DREAMHOUSE
TRAPPED ANIMAL LP / CD

Avant-Garde, art-pop from a visionary new artist based in Iceland. Hallucinogenic, delicate and spellbinding. Dreamhouse is a startling debut.



BEACH FOSSILS
THE OTHER SIDE OF LIFE: PIANO BALLADS
BAYONET RECORDS LP / CD

Dustin Payseur reimagines Beach Fossils' greatest hits alongside a group of formally trained jazz musicians. A mellow mix of piano, sax, and upright bass elevate Payseur's familiar melancholic vocal harmonies.

FORTITUDE VALLEY
FORTITUDE VALLEY
FIKA RECORDS LP / CD

FV are Durham based Brisbanite Laura Kovic (Tigercats) with members of Martha & Night Flowers. It's packed with pathos, humour, & hope, combining power-pop, pop punk & indie rock, for fans of Weezer, Belle & Sebastian & The Beths.

JESSICA'S BROTHER
JUST RAIN
FIKA RECORDS LP / CD

Stitching together a variety of influences, from crunching indie-rock to contemplative psych-folk through a folkloric narrative, Just Rain is both poetic and playful, with a darkness throughout. FFO: Sparklehorse, Silver Jews, The Wave Pictures.

MAYBESHEWILL
NO FEELING IS FINAL
THE ROBOT NEEDS HOME COLLECTIVE LTD LP / CD

Maybeshewill return with their first new music since 2014's Fair Youth. Towering, cinematic instrumental music to soundtrack the crushing anxieties of modern human existence and desperate hope for better futures.

MICHAEL HURLEY
THE TIME OF THE FOXGLOVES
NO QUARTER LP / CD

First studio record in 12 years. Recorded in Astoria, Oregon during the brief time of year when the foxgloves bloom. As comforting and wonderful as any Hurley record that has come before it.

SWANSEA SOUND
LIVE AT THE RUM PUNCHEON
SKEP WAX RECORDS LP / CD

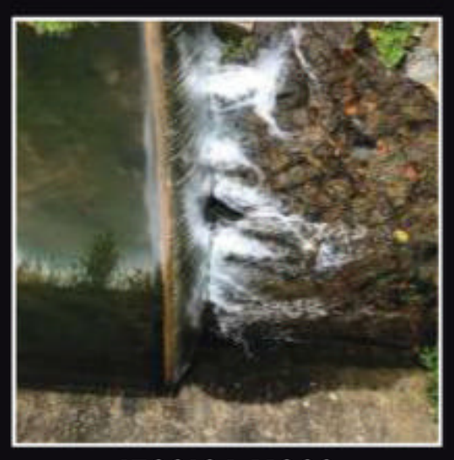
Twelve fizzing, infectious poppunk tunes, re-animating the indie corpse with a fresh supply of anti-corporate lifeblood. Hue and Amelia, once notorious as The Pooh Sticks, are on top form.

HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER
O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

A seasonal record with vibe featuring originals, covers, and standards.

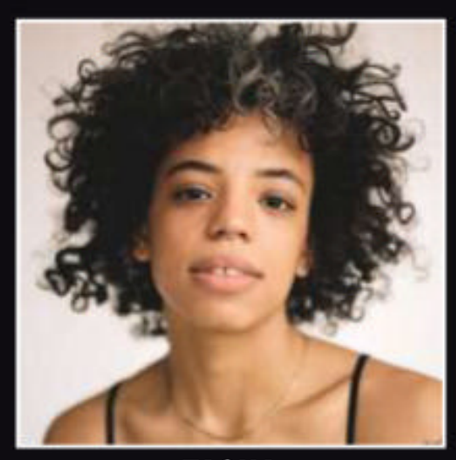
SHE & HIM
A VERY SHE & HIM CHRISTMAS (10TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION)
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

12 Holiday Classics from Zooey Deschanel and M. Ward. 10th Anniversary Deluxe Edition includes Holiday b/w Last Christmas 7".



JESSICA MOSS
PHOSPHENES
CONSTELLATION LP / CD

The acclaimed electroacoustic composer-violinist returns with her most resolute and heart-rending album, including the "Contemplation" requiem on Side One. Sublime post-classical isolation music. RIYL: Stars Of The Lid, Sarah Davachi



TASHA
TELL ME WHAT YOU MISS THE MOST
FATHER/DAUGHTER LP / CD

The sophomore album from Chicago singer/songwriter Tasha, Tell Me What You Miss The Most mingles pockets of introspection with wide, expansive, marvelling at what's yet to come.

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CONTENTS

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JANUARY 2022 Issue 338

FEATURES

30 JASON PIERCE Spiritualized's seeker after transcendence on obsession, illness, "corrupting cliché" and the sonic secrets of hospitals. Plus: words of praise from Iggy Pop!

36 LAURA NYRO Weaving poetry, R&B and Broadway, her songs bemused and beguiled, while she fought the niche the biz allotted her. Friends and collaborators hymn a truly unique talent.

42 THE BEST OF 2021 All the year's best new records, reissues, films and books in one handy guide. Plus: The Weather Station shine on; Rickie Lee Jones reassesses; Warren Ellis – back to live; St. Vincent – what a performance!; Questlove; The Beach Boys. And: Paul Weller, David Crosby, Yola, Chrissie Hynde and more on the best thing they've heard all year.

66 ZAPPA'S 200 MOTELS All it took was $679,000, Ringo Starr and "frequent use of the word 'penis'". The maddest rock film ever, relived by the people it sent insane: "Of course, it was chaos."

COVER STORY

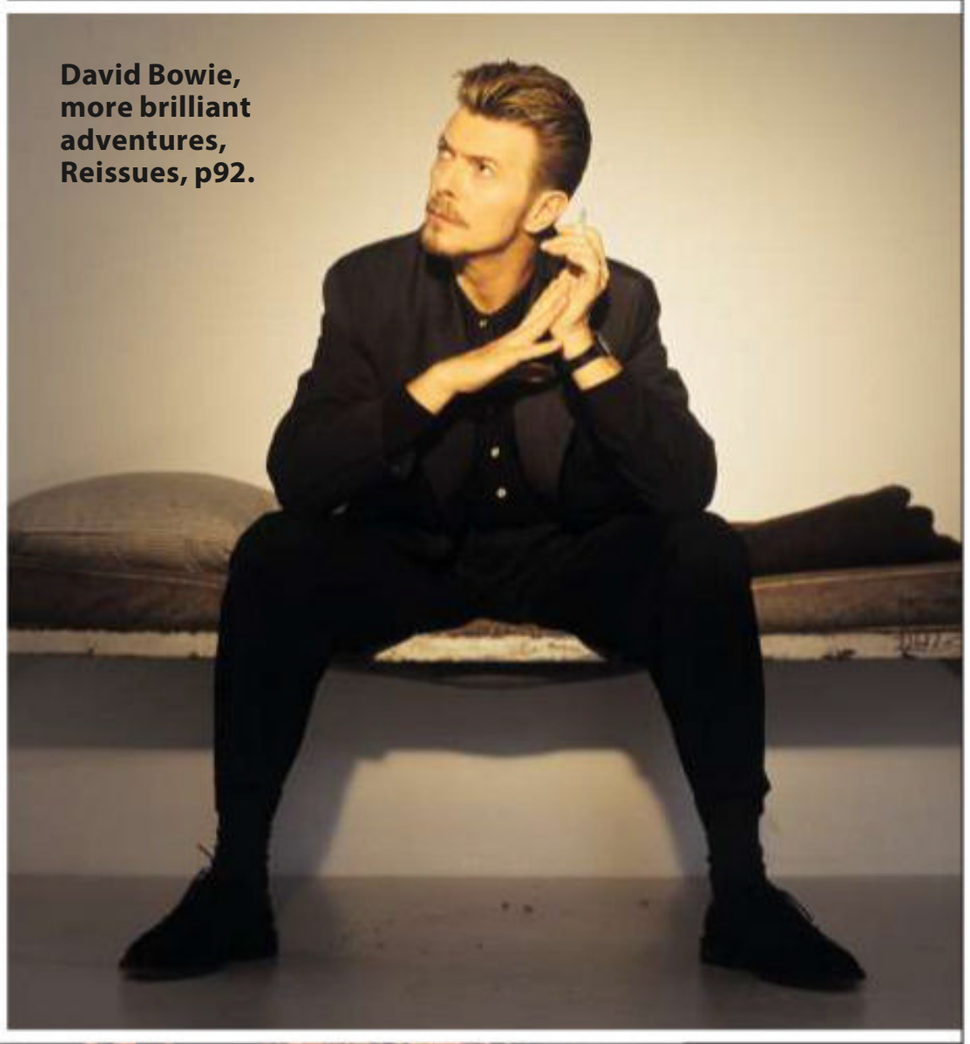
70 THE ROLLING STONES MOJO's man in the American South checks in on the relaunched No Filter tour, forging on in spite of Charlie Watts's passing, to ask: Is this still viable? Plus: Mick, Keith, Glyn Johns and Chris Kimsey on the Tao of Charlie.

Kevin Westenberg

"I've always struggled. Not failed, just struggled to achieve."

SPIRITUALIZED'S JASON PIERCE, P30

Fillmore, more, more! Zappa illuminated by the Joshua Light Show. Check the visuals, p.22.



David Bowie, more brilliant adventures, Reissues, p92.

Barn in the USA: Neil Young & Crazy Horse, Lead Album, p80.

MOJO

REGULARS

7 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Robby Krieger, Lydia Lunch and Susanna Hoffs play you some tunes. But who shoplifted Sabbath's *Paranoid*?

114 REAL GONE Paddy Moloney, Dr Lonnie Smith, Alan Hawkshaw, Everett Morton, and more, thanks and goodnight.

120 ASK MOJO Where are the women record producers? Come on, where?

122 HELLO GOODBYE They broke free of all they had learned. And the end wasn't the end. Irmin Schmidt on the mysteries of Can.

WHAT GOES ON!

12 JOHN LENNON In '76, Lennon was in court fighting mobbed-up music biz terroriser Morris Levy. His brief was lawyer Jay Bergen, who remembers their days in court in a new book.

14 WILL OLDHAM AND BILL CALLAHAN Staving off lockdown torpor with a series of bold duets on favourite songs old and new – they tell us about putting together *Blind Date Party*.

18 MATT JOHNSON The enigma behind The The is back with live career overview The Comeback Special. Confidentially, he talks throat operations, inertia and reading the runes.

20 GENO WASHINGTON He was the R&B shouter who left the US army to spread the soul around '60s Britain. Still funky of butt and poppin' of finger, he's as hungry as ever.

22 THE FILLMORE EAST Bill Graham's legendary NY venue hosted the wildest music scenes in its brief '68-71 life. Journalist and photographer Frank Mastropolo presents a tribute in words and pictures.

MOJO FILTER

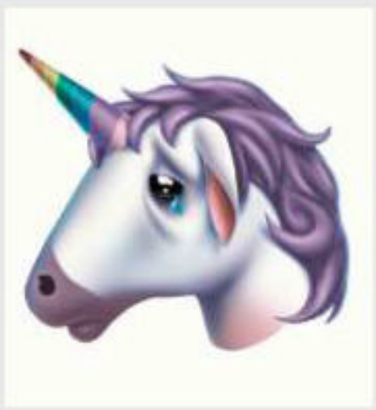
80 NEW ALBUMS Neil Young burns, Abba return, Blue Note echoes and more.

92 REISSUES Another Bowie Adventure, plus Waterboys, Colin Blunstone and more.

106 BOOKS McCartney talks lyrics, plus Leonard Cohen, Lenny Kaye, and more.

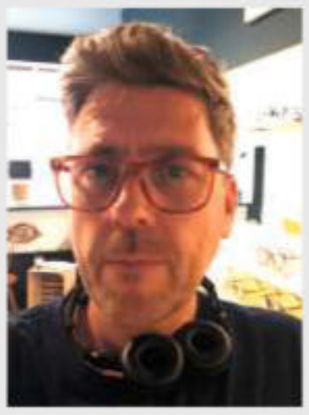
110 SCREEN When Dinosaur Jr roamed the Earth, plunge into J Mascis's world of freak.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



Justin Metz
Award winning digital artist Justin Metz's work has appeared on the covers of Time, The New York Times Magazine and The Atlantic. He enjoys bringing ideas to life and being involved at every stage of the creative process. (He illustrates MOJO's Lead LP, p81)

Grayson Haver Currin
Grayson hiked 2,653 miles from Mexico to Canada along the Pacific Crest Trail this Summer before beginning a road trip across the US. He cut the drive short to fly home to North Carolina and trail The Rolling Stones through the American South for MOJO. (See p70).



Stephen Worthy
MOJO's Electronica columnist, Stephen has been writing about bleeps for the mag since 2008. This month, he interviews Floating Points' Sam Shepherd. "I used to see Sam DJ at a sweaty, rammed Plastic People a decade ago," he writes. "Yet his current success seems totally natural. He's a singular talent." (See p59).

Courtesy Joshua Light Show, Justin Metz,

Teaser and the Firecat

CAT STEVENS

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITIONS

Cat Stevens
Teaser and the Firecat
50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Box Set

Celebrating the legendary 1971 album with this comprehensive 4CD, Blu-Ray, 2LP and 7" single set. Features include: new 50th Anniversary Remaster by Paul Samwell-Smith on CD and HD audio; 41 unreleased demos, sessions and live tracks; 21 TV performances; 7" single of 'Moonshadow' with Spike Milligan narration; 44-page replica of the 'Teaser and the Firecat' book, written and illustrated by Yusuf / Cat Stevens; extensive 108-page hard-cover essay book.
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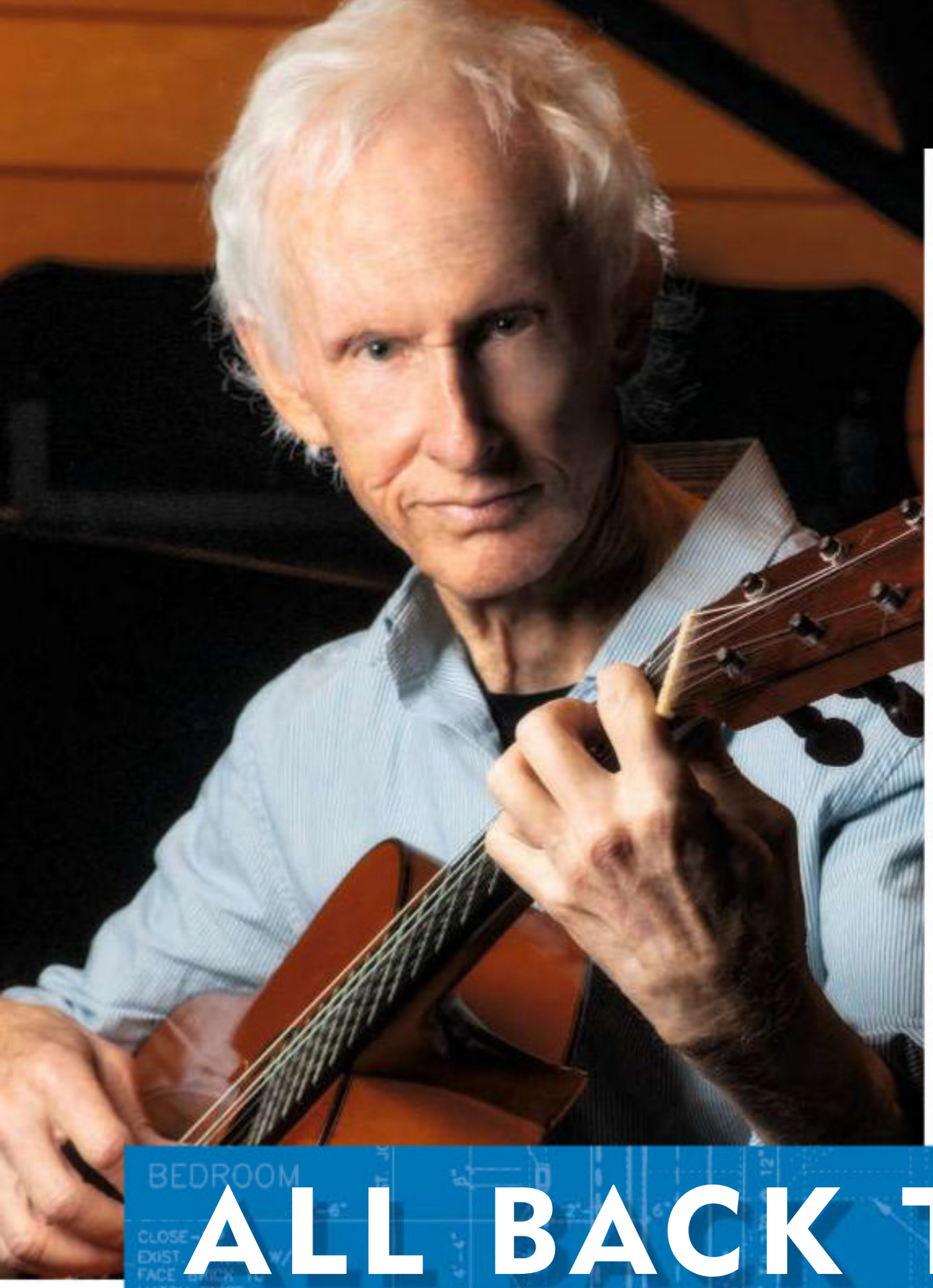


Robby Krieger

HAIL, GUITAR DOOR!

What music are you currently grooving to?

Well, the stuff I've got in my car is Indian music, **Ravi Shankar**. Jazz too – **John Coltrane**, **Freddie Hubbard**, stuff like that. I listen to rock too, but there's not much I relate to. I'm waiting for the '60s to start up again!

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

It might be *Bringing It All Back Home* by **Bob Dylan**. I discovered him while at private school as a teenager. A lot of people hated it when he went electric, but I liked it. I saw him at Long Beach with his electric band while on acid, and really dug it. I know he must've been on acid when he wrote Subterranean Homesick Blues.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I remember buying the single of Hound Dog by **Elvis Presley**, on the back was Don't Be Cruel, my favourite Elvis song, at a little record store in Santa Monica.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Maybe **Wes Montgomery**. I think he's the most naturally talented guitarist I've ever heard. I had to work for it, really practise, but I can just tell he's naturally gifted. I wish I had that.

What do you sing in the shower?

I've never sung in the shower.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Lately, John Coltrane *My Favorite Things*. He's my hero, there's something about the freedom with which he plays. Nobody else has that. It helps me relax and gives me something to shoot for.

And your Sunday morning record?

I never listen to records on Sunday morning. I don't get into music until the afternoon. You have to take a break from it.

Robby Krieger's Set The Night On Fire: Living, Dying, And Playing Guitar With The Doors is published by White Rabbit.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Lydia Lunch

NO WAVE FURIE

What music are you currently grooving to?

Ian White's new LP *Blyth*. Groovy, evocative, wonderfully diverse. **Joseph Keckler** – The Ride. A forlornly romantic lament that brings goosebumps of bliss. His version of **Portishead**'s Sour Times is also bruisingly gorgeous. Sexy as hell. Lush and masterful. Girls will gush. I do.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Blaine L. Reininger & Steven Brown, *100 Years Of Music: Live in Lisbon*. It's so hauntingly beautiful I cannot even listen to it. The perfect recording to prevent or pervert a suicide.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I don't remember buying records but I was a master vinyl thief. Well, one will do what needs be done. *Space Oddity* by **Bowie**, *Transformer* by **Lou Reed**, **Black Sabbath**'s *Paranoid* I'm sure topped the list.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Are you kidding? All my favourite musicians died young, lived too long or were just plain assholes. I'd rather be a trapeze artist, long distance ice trucker, lion tamer, bounty hunter, bootmaker, mortician or forensic psychologist. And to some degree – I am a mutant version of all the above. I don't wish being a musician on anyone. Brutal existence. Not for the lily livered.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't… I murmur, whisper, purr and rant in the bath a most murderous and improvised form of Delta (of Venus) Blues.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

The first two **Stooges** albums on repeat as you bash your bones into the most beautiful boy on the planet… or at least a suitable replicon of what **Iggy Pop** once looked like circa 1969. FUCK! If only.

And your Sunday morning record?

Miles Davis *Sketches Of Spain* transports me to another time, another place, somewhere languid, luxurious, outside of everything and everyone.

Hear Lydia Lunch's podcast at lydianspin.libsyn.com. For more Lunch action go to Instagram.

Jill Jarrett, Jasmine Hirst, Jonathon Kingsbury

Susanna Hoffs

BANGLE, MING TEA GUITAR

What music are you currently grooving to?

I recently discovered a young singer-songwriter named **Joy Oladokun**. Her voice and songs are gorgeous and moving. And I've been listening on repeat to **Joni Mitchell**'s latest archival releases: *Archives Vol. 1* and *The Reprise Albums 1968-1971*, as well as to **The Velvet Underground** and **Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers**, having just seen Todd Haynes' new documentary. A perennial favourite is Águas De Março (Waters Of March) by **Elis Regina And Antônio Carlos Jobim**, a song which can be used as needed to get one through the day.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

An impossible question! I love so many! I'm going to go with **Prince**'s *Purple Rain*. I often start my day listening to Let's Go Crazy. I love the way it opens with the warped gospel-style organ, and the line, "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life…"

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

My older brother and I took the bus to a record shop called The Warehouse in Westwood Village, Los Angeles. I bought *Sweet Baby James*, by **James Taylor**, and *Let It Be*, **The Beatles**.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Joni, **Linda** [**Ronstadt**], **Bonnie** [**Raitt**]. All four Beatles.

What do you sing in the shower?

Everything.

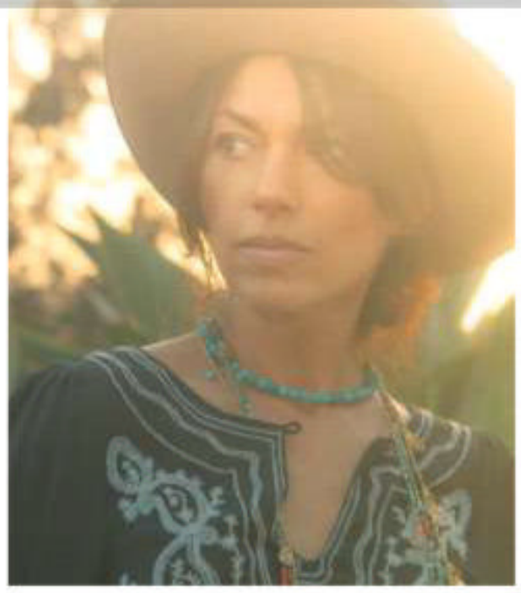
What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Rock Steady written and sung by the amazing **Aretha Franklin**! This song can make *any* night a Saturday night.

And your Sunday morning record?

Sunday Morning by The Velvet Underground, naturally. "Sunday morning, brings the dawn in, it's just a restless feeling, by my side…"

Susanna's new covers set Bright Lights is out now on Baroque Folk Records.



"I often start my day with Let's Go Crazy."

SUSANNA HOFFS

nonesuch

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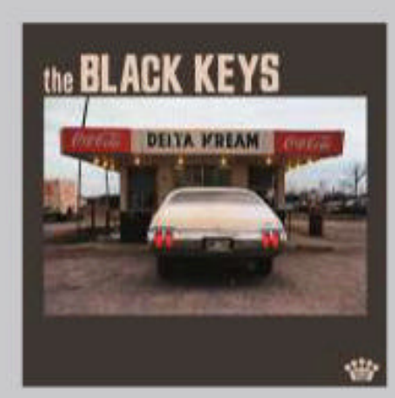


THE BLACK KEYS
Delta Kream

'Their mastery of the unmathematical Hill Country style oozes here from every groove. Their back-to-our-roots arc is hardly new, but this music is timeless, alive, and about as good as it gets.'

– Mojo ★★★★

THE BLACK KEYS
El Camino
(10th Anniversary Edition)

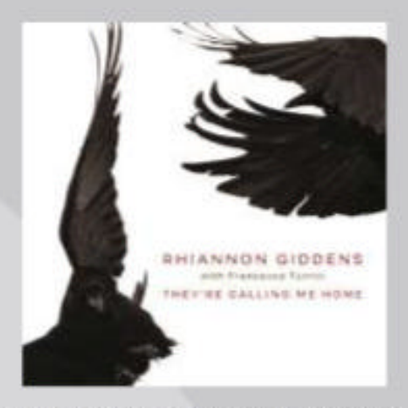
'Upbeat and even joyful, the sound of musicians reminding themselves why they wanted to make music in the first place. The songs sound written like they'd be fun to play, a lot, to large crowds. The pick of the bonuses available with this reissue confirms that this was the case.'

– Uncut

SAM GENDEL
DRM

'A trippy but absorbing sound collage.'

– Record Collector ★★★★



RHIANNON GIDDENS
They're Calling Me Home
(with Francesco Turrisi)

'Sublime. Giddens' extraordinary voice hits new levels of resolute power.'

– Uncut, 9/10

EMMYLOU HARRIS & THE NASH RAMBLERS
Ramble in Music City: The Lost Concert

'The 23 songs include churchy traditionals, Outlaw Country and pop and folk rock covers filtered through spirited, road-honed, note-perfect bluegrass. There's not a bad track here and a slew of highlights, Harris' voice both fragile and powerful.'

– Mojo ★★★★

LAKE STREET DIVE
Obviously

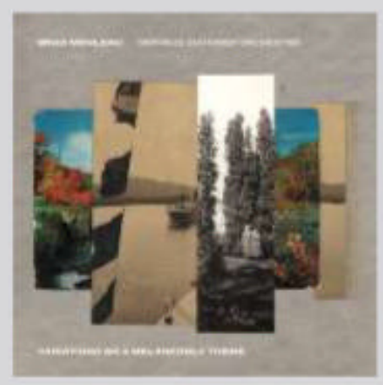
'America's best-kept secret. Lake Street Dive have been one of America's hidden musical treasures for too long. Tight and playful, but not devoid of heft, this is an album to lift the spirits.'

– Daily Mail ★★★★

k.d. lang
makeover

'lang is every bit the equal of the classic singers of the 1950s and '60s who could sing country, pop and jazz with equal style and conviction.'

– Guardian



BRAD MEHLDAU & ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Variations on a Melancholy Theme

'An orchestral synthesis of jazz harmony and classical form inspired by the idea that "Brahms woke up one day, and had the blues".'

– Financial Times ★★★★

RANDY NEWMAN
Roll with the Punches: The Studio Albums (1979-2017)

'The last four decades of America's great storyteller. Taken as a whole, these albums hold a mirror up to the ongoing, evolving state of a nation; an endlessly vivid chronicle, often uncomfortable but with intermittent glimmers of hope.'

– Record Collector ★★★★

CONOR OBERST
Ruminations
(Expanded Edition)

'A direct line into the spirit of Right Now. Heartrendingly beautiful, filled with the beauty of day-drunkenness and Proustian flights into memory and waking up in the afternoon and realizing that, however imperfect the day is, it's a day.'

– GQ

CAROLINE SHAW & SŌ PERCUSSION
Let the Soil Play Its Simple Part

'Beautifully performed and expertly produced, this is music-making at its most vital, expressive and imaginative.'

– BBC Music Magazine ★★★★★

CHRIS THILE
Laysongs

'Nowhere has master mandolinist Thile's formidable mastery been more fully realized than on *Laysongs*. An intimate gaze into the soul of a preternaturally gifted musician.'

– Songlines ★★★★

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Theories, rants, etc.

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NO SPOILERS I PROMISE, BUT THE architect behind MOJO's favourite album of 2021 describes their masterwork on page 59 as "quite a niche idea". On the face of it they're probably right, but that engrossing 46 minutes of music – and again, you really should wait a few pages for the big reveal – tells us something about how our listening habits and tastes can adapt to the moment, and how our range can be far greater than we often assume it to be.

Much of 2021, like much of 2020 before it, has been out of necessity contemplative, and we hope the music, books and films we've highlighted in MOJO – and, indeed, MOJO itself – have provided some help as we all navigate these difficult times. This issue is also, though, about moving on, as we return to the live arena and catch up with our old friends The Rolling Stones, going back to work without the imperturbable figure of Charlie Watts behind the kit.

MOJO 338, too, is a significant one for our team: the last to be put to bed by our Production Editor Geoff Brown, who has been directing the rhythm of the magazine so calmly and assiduously since 1998, and contributing since our very first issue in 1993, for which he reviewed Little Richard and George Clinton. A lot of the knowledge that underpins MOJO, and the elegance with which we dispense it, has been down to Geoff, and we'll miss his reassuring daily presence very much. But we're also relieved to say that his retirement will be disrupted by plenty of writing assignments for MOJO in 2022; his matchless takes on soul, funk and R&B will still be a critical part of our world. In the meantime, thanks for everything, Geoff, and thanks to all of you for your continuing enthusiasm for MOJO and the music we cover. Onwards!

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

The kids are looking for something else

Thanks to MOJO for one of those life-affirming 'isn't music just great' moments [MOJO 337]. Sitting by my sleeping young daughter as she recovers from a nasty virus – *Led Zep IV* on LOUD in my headphones. Flipping back and forth across the article and revisiting a record I hadn't actually listened to for years. Yeah, we did fight the Punk Rock Wars – but Stairway is amazing, isn't it?

Richard Engler, Finsbury Park

John Lennon says one shouldn't drink it

Jon Savage's excellent review of The Beatles' expanded *Let It Be* [MOJO 337] highlights the absence of a full rooftop concert. I was one of many who lamented and was disappointed by that, but further examination of what has already been officially released provides an explanation for the omission. On that cold January day, The Fabs played nine songs on the rooftop and we currently have:

1. Get Back (Take 1 – soundcheck): Unavailable
2. Get Back (Take 2): Unavailable
3. Don't Let Me Down (Take 1): 2021 *Let It Be Boxed Set*; *Let It Be Naked* (Edit of both takes)
4. I've Got A Feeling (Take 1): Original 1970 *Let It Be* LP; *Let It Be Naked* (Edit of both takes)
5. One After 909: Original 1970 *Let It Be* LP
6. Dig A Pony: Original 1970 *Let It Be* LP
7. I've Got A Feeling (Take 2): *Let It Be Naked* (Edit of both takes)
8. Don't Let Me Down (Take 2): *Let It Be Naked* ➢

➢ (Edit of both takes)
9. Get Back (Take 3): *Anthology 3*
The completist geek in me would still love to have a stand-alone release of this momentous occasion, but I think most normal, well-balanced fans would accept that sadly, it probably isn't going to happen.

Ian Tatlock, via e-mail

I can afford, shall we say, to do exactly what I want

I was really saddened to hear of the death of Alan Lancaster, the erstwhile bassist in Status Quo [MOJO 337] and part author and singer of one of Quo's finest moments – Backwater, the sensational opener from the *Quo* LP. Having seen Alan with the Quo prior to his departure, and catching them again on the Frantic Four reunion tour in 2013, the boys never sounded the same without his devastating low end and rough throat vocals.

One of my very few brushes with rock stardom occurred in May 1984 outside the Bramhall Moat House Hotel. Quo were staying there during a two-night stint at the Manchester Apollo. As a young sixth former, I'd hung around outside the hotel in an attempt to get my copy of *Just Supposin'* signed. At one point, Alan emerged from the hotel arm in arm with a blonde lady and, after signing said LP sleeve, asked me where he could find a jar of Marmite! Eager to please and slightly starstruck, I directed him to Bramhall village where he would find a Co-op. He returned half an hour later with the jar of spread, and I felt my part in rock'n'roll history and supplying the stars with their every need had been fulfilled.

Richard Smith, Cheddar, Somerset

We have to choose very carefully where we go

I read Andy Pegg's e-mail to Theories, Rants in MOJO 336 with interest. I was also standing in St Albans market, outside Our Price, in probably 1981, just in time to hear the start of Under My Thumb from the Stones' *Still Life* album coming from the record shop (at a volume unachievable by most of us at the time), and in particular when Charlie Watts comes in after the first few bars. Like Andy, it felt like a formative rock'n'roll moment, and I will never forget that experience of passion for music. So thank you the Stones, and especially Charlie Watts.

Simon Ward, via e-mail

We'll probably be around for a year, maybe a year-and-a-half

I started with MOJO issue 6 and stayed with you for years before a lack of funds saw my subscription die and we parted our separate ways. It was hard but I managed to kick my monthly MOJO fix. A year ago I fell prey to temptation and bought a copy and then another and then another and… yup! I'm hooked again. You've done it again with your Karl Wallinger piece [MOJO 337]. I remember the excitement at hearing the inventiveness and rich production of *Goodbye Jumbo* and it's still a favourite. I've often wondered what happened to this unsung genius. Thanks for making a difference once a month.

Tony Ashton, via e-mail

What do you set out to do in your act? Entertain people.

I was extremely disappointed to see only a throwaway couple of lines in They Also Served for Darts' Bob Fish [MOJO 336]. The Darts hit TV screens on Top Of The Pops in '77/78 and were in the Guinness Book Of Records for three consecutive Number 2s without making it to Number 1 – not a great way to be remembered, but nevertheless remembered fondly they are. With a touring schedule that led Danny Baker to say they were more rock'n'roll than the Sex Pistols in terms of what they got up to, they paved the way for a doo wop and rock'n'roll revival (Showaddywaddy, a few years before, were more glam teds). They gained a loyal following who still meet up and go to their gigs, with more planned in 2022

Jerry Goldsmith, via e-mail

One's brought up to think pop music's a very ephemeral thing

I've been enjoying your 50th anniversary articles over the last year on albums released in 1971. Hope next year you'll consider articles on classics from 1972 including *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust*, *Can't Buy A Thrill*, *Something/Anything* and *Don't Shoot Me*, *I'm Only The Piano Player*.

Gordon Barclay, via e-mail

There isn't any secret. It's all very obvious.

Were The Beatles heavenly creatures? The film quotes in MOJO 336's Theories, Rants Etc suggest so. They are from Heavenly Creatures, a 1994 movie directed by Peter Jackson. The same Mr Jackson is in charge of the three Get Back films previewed in John Harris's Beatles story.

Brian Stoat's letter about no Beatles in MOJO 335 made me smile. Sadly, he's wrong. McCartney and Lennon are mentioned in Martin Aston's Volcanic Reactions story about the derelict AIR Studios in Montserrat. Lennon's MOJO 327 cover is pictured on page 32. And the Fab Four feature in Ian Harrison's Faust story: "Somehow, Uwe Nettelbeck…. convinced Polydor that Faust were the German Beatles." There's no escaping these beloved dinosaurs.

Jan Vollaard, Amsterdam

…Your letter headings for MOJO 337 were from the fantastic and fantastical Powell & Pressburger film, A Matter Of Life & Death… presumably as there is a huge stairway to heaven in the movie.

Mike Kirkup, Northumberland

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CELEBRATING 50th anniversary PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL RECORDS

SIX BRAND NEW ARTIST COLLECTIONS

THE BEST OF
THE INTRUDERS

- (WE'LL BE) UNITED
- TOGETHER
- COWBOYS TO GIRLS
- (LOVE IS LIKE A) BASEBALL GAME
- SLOW DRAG
- SAD GIRL
- WHEN WE GET MARRIED
- (WIN, PLACE OR SHOW) SHE'S A WINNER
- I'LL ALWAYS LOVE MY MAMA (PART I)
- I WANNA KNOW YOUR NAME
- A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU
- PLAIN OL' FASHIONED GIRL
- TO BE HAPPY IS THE REAL THING
- MOTHER AND CHILD REUNION

THE BEST OF
THE O'JAYS

- BACK STABBERS
- LOVE TRAIN
- FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY
- TIME TO GET DOWN
- SUNSHINE
- I LOVE MUSIC
- PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER
- 992 ARGUMENTS
- NOW THAT WE FOUND LOVE
- SURVIVAL
- USE TA BE MY GIRL
- GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT
- LIVIN' FOR THE WEEKEND
- DARLIN' DARLIN' BABY (SWEET, TENDER, LOVE)
- MESSAGE IN OUR MUSIC
- FAMILY REUNION
- BRANDY (I REALLY MISS YOU)
- PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER

THE BEST OF
HAROLD MELVIN & THE BLUE NOTES

- THE LOVE I LOST (PART I)
- WAKE UP EVERYBODY (PART I)
- BAD LUCK (PART I)
- IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME BY NOW
- WHERE ARE ALL MY FRIENDS
- BE FOR REAL
- SATISFACTION GUARANTEED (OR TAKE YOUR LOVE BACK)
- YOU KNOW HOW TO MAKE ME FEEL SO GOOD
- DON'T LEAVE ME THIS WAY
- HOPE THAT WE CAN BE TOGETHER SOON
- I MISS YOU

THE BEST OF
TEDDY PENDERGRASS

- I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE
- CLOSE THE DOOR
- THE LOVE I LOST (PART I)
- YOU'RE MY LATEST, MY GREATEST INSPIRATION
- LIFE IS A SONG WORTH SINGING
- WAKE UP EVERYBODY
- TURN OFF THE LIGHTS
- BAD LUCK (PART I)
- DO ME
- LOVE T.K.O.
- WHEN SOMEBODY LOVES YOU BACK
- IF YOU DON'T KNOW ME BY NOW
- THE WHOLE TOWN'S LAUGHING AT ME
- THE MORE I GET, THE MORE I WANT
- YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM YOURSELF
- GET UP, GET DOWN, GET FUNKY, GET LOOSE
- ONLY YOU
- COME GO WITH ME

THE BEST OF
LOU RAWLS

- YOU'LL NEVER FIND ANOTHER LOVE LIKE MINE
- GROOVY PEOPLE
- LADY LOVE
- SEE YOU WHEN I GIT THERE
- ONE LIFE TO LIVE
- THERE WILL BE LOVE
- LET ME BE GOOD TO YOU
- SIT DOWN AND TALK TO ME
- NOT THE STAYING KIND
- AIN'T THAT LOVING YOU (FOR MORE REASONS THAN ONE)

THE BEST OF
BILLY PAUL

- ME AND MRS. JONES
- AM I BLACK ENOUGH FOR YOU?
- PEOPLE POWER
- THANKS FOR SAVING MY LIFE
- BROWN BABY
- LET THE DOLLAR CIRCULATE
- LET'S MAKE A BABY
- ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE
- HOW GOOD IS YOUR GAME
- BRING THE FAMILY BACK
- THE WHOLE TOWN'S TALKING
- BE TRUTHFUL TO ME

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LEGACY

WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AN[illegible]IES FROM PLANET MOJO

Mob-La-Di, Mob-La-Da

Lennon Vs. The Mafia? Lawyer Jay Bergen tells all about how they beat the rap.

JANUARY 1976, and in his last act before slipping out of the public eye for over four years, John Lennon sat on the witness stand at the US District Court in New York, taking on notorious mob-affiliated record mogul, Morris Levy. "He was the best witness I ever had," Lennon's then-lawyer Jay Bergen tells MOJO today. "John was very smart, and we'd spent a lot of time going over the facts."

Bergen had been brought in to oversee the case, which he details in his book, Lennon, The Mobster And The Lawyer, coming in March 2022. The legal fight was sparked by Levy's release, the previous January, of an album, *Roots: John Lennon Sings The Great Rock & Roll Hits*. It comprised rough mixes from the infamously drunk and druggy "Lost Weekend" Los Angeles sessions of 1973, overseen by an unhinged Phil Spector (and rush-released in its proper form by Apple as *Rock 'N' Roll* in February '75). "He was worried because he thought his fans were going to hate this album!" Bergen says of *Roots*...

Lennon's entanglement with Levy had begun with his casual referencing in Come Together of Chuck Berry's You Can't Catch Me, prompting a copyright infringement claim from Levy's Big Seven Music and an out-of-court agreement for Lennon to record three songs from the Big Seven catalogue. So far, so messy. Then, in October '73 Spector had stolen the *Rock 'N' Roll* tapes. When they reappeared, Levy insisted he had a verbal agreement with Lennon to release the television-sold *Roots*... LP. Lennon and Capitol Records, claiming the record was a bootleg, sued.

Bergen stresses that Morris Levy was an intimidating and violent character, and an associate of the feared Vincent 'The Chin' Gigante of the Genovese Mafia crime family. "Morris was very dangerous," he states, while pointing out that Levy never actually dared to threaten Lennon with violence. "I think John had too big a profile for Morris to try that," he says.

"Someday, I'm going to write an album about all my and The Beatles' legal problems."

JOHN LENNON

Lennon was, of course, no stranger to legal woes, given The Beatles' court case five years earlier in 1971. In fact, on day one in New York, he asked photographer Bob Gruen to furtively snap a photo of him on the stand, with a specific purpose in mind. Bergen remembers Lennon telling him, "Someday, I'm going to write an album of songs about all of my and The Beatles' legal problems. And that picture is going to be the cover."

In the end, Levy lost, to the tune of $151,000, roughly $727,000 today. Bergen says he and Lennon felt huge vindication in facing up to such a menacing figure (Levy died in 1990, having been convicted of extortion): "John had been able to really stop this bully from pushing him around."

Bergen's book will feature extensive court transcripts alongside his personal memories of Lennon, such as their shared love of '50s rock'n'roll, and discussion of when the teenage Jay went to Philadelphia alone to see Elvis because no one in his college dorm wanted to go. It captures the ex-Beatle at a point when he'd just become a father to Sean and was ready to disappear into his house husband years. "I wanted people to learn about this time in John Lennon's life when he just wanted to be John Lennon," says Bergen. "He didn't want to be an icon. He wanted to be a father, a New Yorker. Y'know, just living his life."

Tom Doyle

Lennon, The Mobster And The Lawyer: The Untold Story Of How John Lennon Took Down A Music Industry Gangster is published in March 2022.

Roots manoeuvres: (clockwise from main) Lennon, March 1975; John and Yoko with legal team, Jay Bergen far right, January 1976; Morris Levy; Vincent Gigante behind bars.

© Bob Gruen/www.bobogruen.com (2), Getty (2)

Matchmaking whoopee: Will Oldham (left) and Bill Callahan, rising high on the Fantasy Musician League

Where There's A Will There's A Bill

They've thrown a guest-packed Blind Date Party. **Will Oldham** and **Bill Callahan** interview each other about "the super-niceness".

TERRIFIED BY lockdown inactivity, two of America's most restless singer-songwriters, Will Oldham and Bill Callahan, decided to host their own *Blind Date Party*. That's the title of a new double album recorded last year by the sometime Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, and the man formerly known as Smog.

Each an avowed live-in-the-room recording artist, pandemic isolation forced them to get together with musicians from their shared label Drag City's roster via digital means, over 19 extraordinary cover versions, which they drip-fed online. The tracks have an exploratory and often delirious edge, as party hosts and guests including Matt Sweeney, George Xylouris, Meg Baird, Sean O'Hagan, David Pajo and Six Organs Of Admittance attack songs by authors ranging from Iggy Pop and country star Jerry Jeff Walker, through to fallen heroes David Berman and John Prine. Where else but Zoom for a *tête-à-tête* between the two friends?

Bill Callahan: We'd been talking about us two doing a tour with David Berman [of Silver Jews], then David died [in August 2019], and once the pandemic hit Will was looking for some closure in that dialogue. He came up with this digital recording idea, for us, the employees at Drag City, the bands – to give us all something to do. Right, Will?

Will Oldham: Yeah! We'd first met, me and Bill, probably in 1993. I still think of Bill as the old guard on Drag City, and I'm new, because I didn't put out a release until the fall of 1992, a 7-inch. Then, my girlfriend in the '90s and I made a Smog video, and we did a number of tours together in different parts of the world.

BC: We sang [Smog classic] Bathysphere on-stage once in North Carolina.

WO: With these *Blind Date Party* collaborations, we were saying to people, "You want to do this? It can be stupid, and we'll have fun!" People got silly, some got serious, and we all did something just for the sake of doing it. Everyone worked extremely quickly, and we took energy from all the music everybody was sending to us being vital and inspiring. We got this

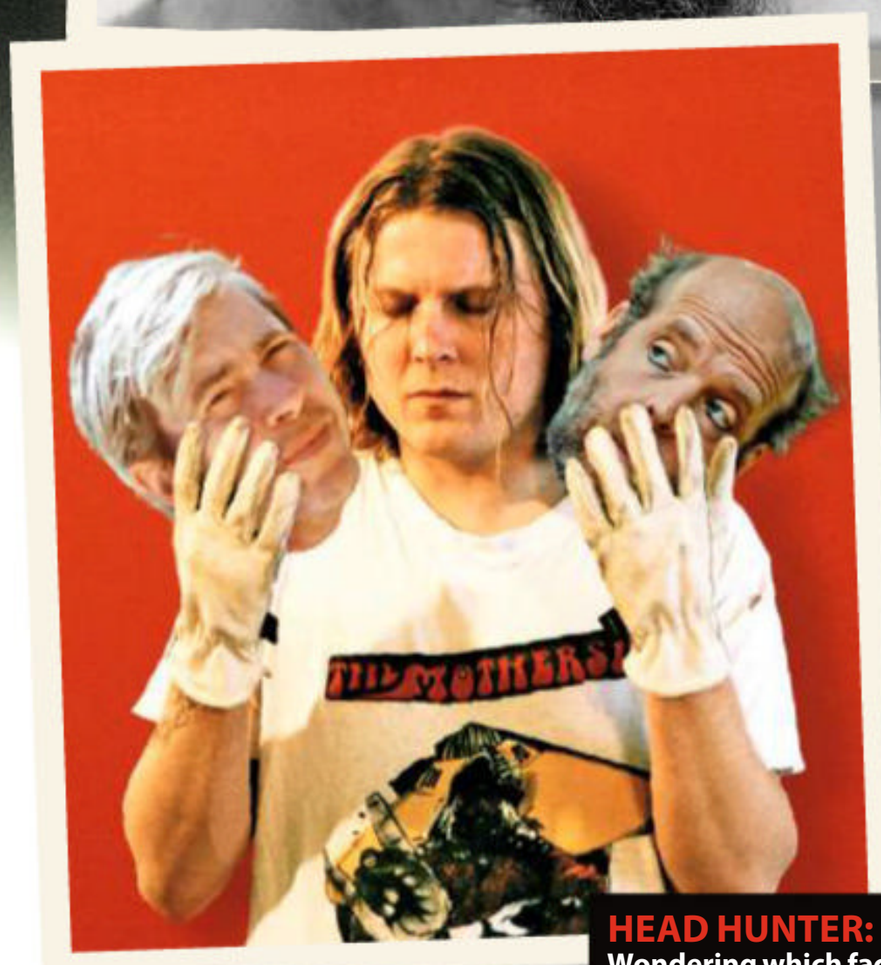
> **"Everybody was just mouths, ears, eyes and hearts wide open…"**
> **WILL OLDHAM**

Hanley Banks Callahan, Mabel Cooper, Christian Hansen, Matt Kinsey, Liv Kinsey, Denee Segall, Mickie Winters, Elisa Ambrogio, Mclean Stephenson, Finton O'Hagan. James Sharrock, Getty (2).

Fantasy Musician League where we were collaborating with heroes like Jerry Jeff Walker and Iggy Pop – songwriters, who we got to reach out to. I'm almost 52 and for a brief

GNOSTIC WINDOW: Crafty Bill and Will keep watch on Six Organs Of Admittance's Ben Chasny.

TWO-FACE (THE STRANGE): Callahan (left) and Oldham (right), via digital wizardry, fuse their split personalities.



HEAD HUNTER: Wondering which face to wear, Ty Segall. Their Blind Date cover: Johnnie Frierson's Miracles.

moment we could really pretend that we were colleagues with these people.

BC: I never knew what to expect. I feel like the music was attacked with a pandemic fervour, people suddenly having a new project with free rein to do whatever they want. The record has some very complex stuff, like the Iggy Pop song [I Want To Go To The Beach], then it has got [Air Supply's] Lost In Love, one of my favourites, which is very sparse. I never would've made a record that sounded like 90 per cent of this stuff. But now I have. And then the title came at the end of making the music.

WO: I think you said "blind date", and I said "blind date party".

BC: A true collaboration!

WO: I had a hat made that said "Blind Date Party" on it. One of the advantages of the pandemic lockdown was the opportunity to get the music available to audiences digitally without any hoopla at all. The pandemic created in the audience a heightened sense of urgency, where we knew that people wouldn't be like, "Well, that's a little overblown!" Everybody was just mouths, ears, eyes and hearts wide open, like, "Give it to me! I need it *so bad*!" Everybody was so at their wits' end that the insanity of the song selection appeared as the most sane thing happening in music.

BC: You thought Blackness Of The Night was a good pandemic song, right?

WO: Yeah! And overall, I think our voices sound really super-nice together.

BC: I feel like I'm kind of a one-trick pony, and that Will has a thousand great voices. Working on this only proved that 100 times over, hearing all the different places he could take his voice, like, this guy can do anything! I hate the word intimate – so many reviews say that gigs are intimate, and that makes me giggle – but Will is like listening to your lover talking to you. That's how close I feel he gets to the heart.

WO: Bill saying that he's a one-trick pony is a costume he has created for himself. He's found the horse he likes to ride, and he just rides that horse. People said Leonard Cohen couldn't sing, and Lee Hazlewood, but like them Bill has an insane sense of musicality, even in his understatedness. Song after song, as we went along and got lubed up, Bill may've even surprised himself. I knew he could do anything, he just chooses to ride that big beautiful austere graceful horse that he has broken and trained – but when I got Bill's voice on top of Ty Segall's arrangement of Miracles, and he erupts into a falsetto mini-scream, I just thought, "OK, this project is a success!"

Listening in: Andrew Perry

Blind Date Party is released on Drag City on December 10.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Peter Hammill

VdGG's magus salutes Steve Marcus's free-jazz eruption ***The Lord's Prayer*** (Vortex, 1969).

I picked this up in Montreal in '74. This is how it went when I first listened to it. The album kicks off with an instrumental take of Hey Jude with barely competent horn playing. Hmm. Then the drums join in… and, what, this drummer [Larry Clark] is either completely mad or can't drum at all. It stumbles along then a whole big band arrives in a hard edit. Second track is a quartet, Marcus on tenor, Herbie Hancock, Miroslav Vitous and Bob Moses (the "proper" drummer). Musicianly 'A Team' fusion of the era. Third. Omigod. Clark is back, drumming and singing a verse of Tom Thumb's Blues. His singing is worse than his drumming. Only a minute long but dreadful. Straight into wild soprano laid over smooth tenor. End of side one. What is this record about?

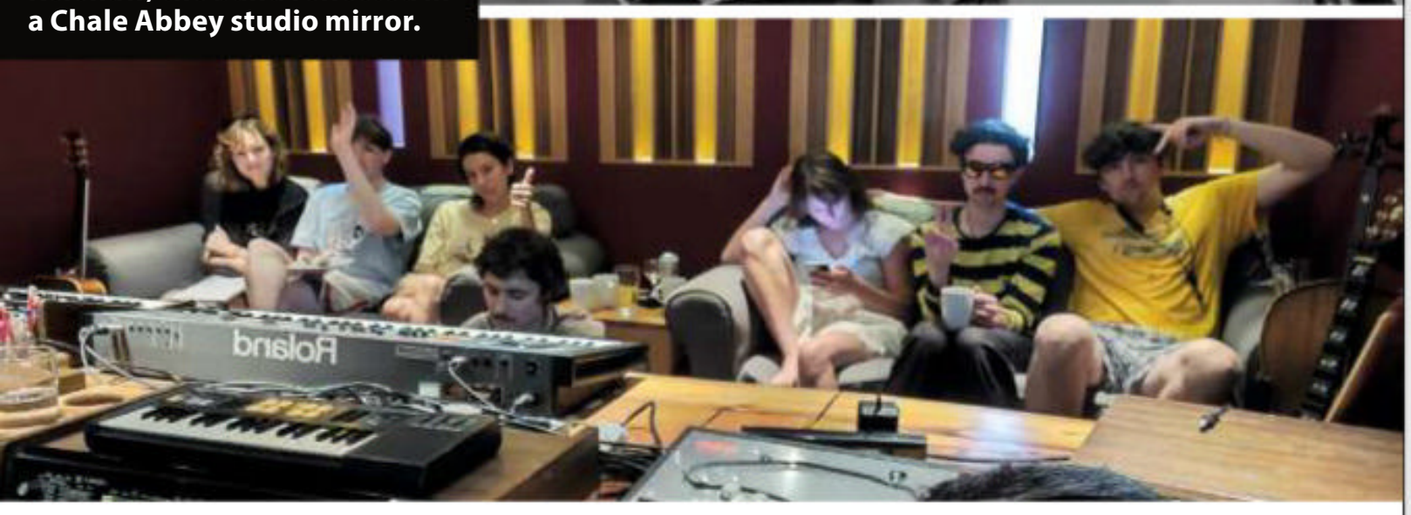
Side two. It's Wild Thing. Marcus moves to electric guitar. He's *not* a guitarist. Larry drums, Larry sings. There's some parpy tenor, not really on the money. It all falls apart after a couple of minutes. Straight into a Vitous composition, Hope. It's the quartet once more and Marcus shows his (serious) chops. Well, they all do. Um, now? A child's off-kilter recorder performance of America/God Save The Queen. What?

Finally, in The Lord's Prayer itself, everything is collected and collaged. Larry's drumming and singing, in this context, works. In fact, the whole thing works. It wouldn't make sense without all the non-sense which has preceded it.

Basically this record puts together and takes apart lots of stuff about the making of music. And the conclusion it (sonically) comes to is – you can make music any way you want if it's done with Enthusiasm and Purpose and Conviction and if you Don't Give a Damn. Reinvent! I was well on my way to following these dicta when this record came into my life. Once it had done so, I took them deeper into my heart and ran with them. Respect and thanks.

The Charisma Years 1970-1978 is out now. VdGG tour the UK in February 2022.

Isle of Wight riot (clockwise from main): Isaac Woods prepares to sing: bassist Tyler Hyde; keys player May Kershaw; the band reflected in a Chale Abbey studio mirror.



FACT SHEET

Title: *Ants From Up There*
Due: February 2022
Songs: Intro / Concorde / Bread Song / Good Will Hunting / Haldern / Mark's Theme / The Place Where He Inserted The Blade / Snow Globes / Basketball Shoes
The Buzz: "It was more of an ambitious project, more subtle, melodic and musically considered, with a lot less crazy textures to get something across emotionally. Not that much has stayed the same, to be honest."
Lewis Evans

BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD REINVENT THEMSELVES FOR "ISLAND ALBUM" TWO

"LOOK AT those people down there. They look like ants." "They are ants. We haven't taken off yet." This aeroplane window dad-joke is a venerable gag, having been used by Billy Connolly in the 1977 movie version of Are You Being Served?, and by Bob Newhart in his monologue The Grace L Ferguson Air Line, way back in 1960.

Black Country, New Road's new record is called *Ants From Up There*, but they assure MOJO it's got nothing to do with antique comedians. "We had this really long list of titles," says bassist Tyler Hyde. "We also considered 'Bug Stuff', 'Lifting Up A Log And Seeing A Tiny Little Wood Louse', 'I've Seen Bugs' and, a close second, *Bird Song!* [sic]. A lot of the music *is* kind of buggy, I think. So it came round to a title that actually made a bit of sense."

"We're shit at coming up with names for songs, albums or even the band," adds sax player Lewis Evans. "It takes us so much longer to do that than it does to write music."

Their second long-player was recorded in Chale Abbey Studios on the Isle Of Wight in two-and-a-bit weeks in July, though an initial plan to mix it there as well was deferred. The group decamped to the studio – housed within a 16th century stone barn – with all material prepared. They played long days, recorded all together and aimed for "four great takes" of each song.

"It's a beautiful studio and the massive live room was amazing," says Evans. "[Producers] Serge [Maschetzko] and David [Granshaw] were playing around with ambiences so you can really hear the room as well as the dry sounds of each instrument. Every reverb is analogue. In fact, I don't think there's any digital shit done to it."

The Slint-y post-punk-jazz of February's *For The First Time* has been upgraded, they say, with lead track Chaos Space Marine coming across like a merging of The Divine Comedy and Pulp. "A while ago, we were talking about Arcade Fire quite a lot," says Hyde of the new direction. "Going down that kind of pop-inspired way of writing music. There's choruses! This album is much more cute than the first one. Quite twee. It's a woodland album, and also nautical and aeronautical as well. It's an island album."

Voice and lyricist Isaac Woods is now a singer rather than a spoken word *Sprechgesanger*, Evans reveals, because he found earlier tracks' intimate confidences too exposing. "I think what he really tried to do, for his own mental health, was to write music about the things he really cares about in a way that wasn't horrible to hear 200 people singing back at you," says Evans. "So there are some songs about love, about being sad, about being happy, about Warhammer figurines. Shit like that." Woods also gets more vocal assistance from the group. "We're not a band that is like, just one man speaks for all of us," says Hyde. "He writes great lyrics and great melodies, but it doesn't necessarily represent all of our input in the music."

"[The album] is quite a dramatic leap," she concludes. "But we've introduced some of these new songs live and they seem to be going down well. I don't think it's a huge leap from Track X, which is the one track that kind of stuck out like a sore thumb on the first album. Some people might be a bit outraged and want the sound of the first album, but they're not going to get it."

Ian Harrison

> **"This album is much more cute than the first one. Quite twee."**
> **TYLER HYDE**

ALSO WORKING

…in an interview in October with newspaper La Stampa, **PETER GABRIEL** (right) confirmed a new album was "closer than you think" and that he was working on 17 new songs … **CATE LE BON**'s *Pompeii (You will be forever connected to everything)* lands in February 2022. "The world is on fire but the bins must go out on a Tuesday night," she comments. "I put a groove behind it for something to hold onto" …the current **Dave Vanian** and **Captain Sensible**-led line-up of **THE DAMNED** – not the 1976 version with **Rat Scabies** and **Brian James**, who play reunion gigs next February – are recording a new album, out next year. As Captain diplomatically told MOJO, the original formation making new music has "not been spoken about" …the reformed **BOO RADLEYS** – minus main songwriter **Martin Carr** – release *Keep On With Falling* next March … **John Frusciante** and the **RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS** are close to completing their first new LP together since 2006's *Stadium Arcadium*. "It's so thrilling to see that group of people back together," producer **Rick Rubin** told the Talk Is Jericho podcast … **THE ZUTONS** are cutting their first LP since 2008 at Abbey Road with **Nile Rodgers** (left) … **INTERPOL** are preparing a new record with producers **Flood** and **Alan Moulder** … Atlanta, Georgia rapper **YOUNG THUG** has sought inspiration by working at his Snake Pit studios in the company of tarantulas, snakes, bulldogs and a Bengal cat. The rapper tells Complex magazine, "they're all named Tootie…"

Getty (2)

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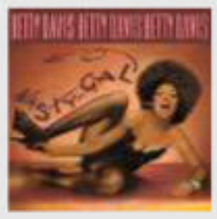
Burning blue soul: Matt Johnson looks you in the eye.



WILCO, JOHNSON

Matt's Mind Bombs

1 Randy Newman *Baltimore* (FROM *LITTLE CRIMINALS*, WARNER BROS, 1977)

2 Betty Davis *The Lone Ranger* (FROM *NASTY GAL*, ISLAND, 1975)

3 Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti *Baby* (FROM *MATURE THEMES*, 4AD, 2012)

4 Galt MacDermot And His Mid Manhattan Rhythm Section *Coffee Cold* (FROM *SHAPES OF RHYTHM*, KILMARNOCK, 1966)

5 David Axelrod *Holy Thursday* (FROM *SONG OF INNOCENCE*, CAPITOL, 1968)

MATT JOHNSON

The The's returned generalissimo talks inertia, prescience, life and death.

"I'M MUCH more mellow and laidback now," promises Matt Johnson, AKA The The. These are not words often associated with '80s LPs such as *Soul Mining*, *Infected* and *Mind Bomb*, where the Stratford-born auteur gene-spliced post-punk and pop to conduct unflinching examinations into extreme emotional states, a world in flames and, as a song from 1992's *Dusk* powerfully stated, how Love Is Stronger Than Death. There was, however, a lengthy hiatus after 2000's *Naked Self*, broken by a surprise tour in 2018. Johnson is full of praise for his current group and film director Tim Pope, who, that year, helped him make the new live-at-the-Royal Albert Hall concert movie The Comeback Special. Filmed days after Johnson's father Eddie passed away, the pin-sharp performance runs the full gamut of The The, from death, lust and despair to ultimate transcendence. "You've got to adopt the sense of an alchemist really," says Johnson, who also keeps busy running his own Cinéola label and studio, and promises a new The The studio album. "There's so much darkness and negativity. How to create something beautiful and hopeful from it?"

There were gruesome online pictures of you after throat surgery in summer 2020, and you said you didn't know if you'd sound like Tiny Tim or Howlin' Wolf afterwards. Which was it?

I still sound like myself, good or bad. It was a horrible situation, but thankfully I had a very good surgeon. I didn't want the operation. I said, "Look, just give me more antibiotics," and he said, "No, this is now life or death, it doesn't matter about tone of voice." I was like, Jesus! I wasn't allowed to sing for six months, but I made a good recovery.

Did you worry that The Comeback Special might be your legacy? How do you view The The's legacy?

Well, I don't really think about legacies and stuff. I suppose, the plan with this tour was to try and represent each of the albums in a fair way, and do fresh versions, and filter the songs through this new line-up. It was probably the most enjoyable tour I've done, actually. People kept asking me to tour for years and I kept turning it down, saying, "No, I want to wait until I've got a new record." And then I thought, Let's go out and do a career retrospective, an overview, and wrap it up nicely, and then I can move on and do new stuff. I'm looking forward to getting into a new record. There's a lot of stuff to write about. There's no excuse for not having new material, it's bombarding us every day.

The prescience of past songs like The Beat(en) Generation or Sweet Bird Of Truth is striking.

My honest answer is, I'd much rather all these songs were completely out of date and irrelevant, that we were living in calmer, happier, healthier times for everybody. [But] it certainly makes it easier to sing songs like Global Eyes and Armageddon Days Are Here (Again), they're still very relevant.

There was a long pause from 2002 to 2017.

The inertia really kicked in… probably between 2002 and 2010. During that time, I hadn't picked up a guitar, it was quite astonishing. And what got me out of it really was the [2005] poem The Inertia Variations by John Tottenham. You realise that the work doesn't do itself. The inspiration only comes when you start forcing it. Once I started work again, I was surprised, you know, how pleasurable that was, and how much I'd missed it.

Do you regret spending so much time out of contention?

I feel very calm about the pace that I've worked at. I've obviously got a certain amount of ego, but I'm not terrified if I'm not in the press. I feel quietly confident chipping away, doing what I'm doing. I think if you do the best you can sincerely, it will find its audience. I've always thought long term… and there's so much I want to do. I still feel in my twenties inside, like I'm still at the start of my career.

Do you, as some online commentators say, think Covid was some kind of inside job?

All I would say is that nothing makes sense in the official narrative. The problem is, if you contradict the official narrative, you get called a conspiracy theorist, and an anti-vaxxer, and all sorts of sort of pejorative abusive language. I'm not a Covid denier and I'm not a conspiracy theorist. All I know is that my suspicions are aroused and I try to get to the truth.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

The first song I wrote was called Walk On. I was about 11 years old, in my first little band Road Star. It was so exciting, realising that I didn't have to just sing Beatles or David Bowie songs.

As told to Ian Harrison

"I feel in my twenties… at the start of my career."
MATT JOHNSON

The The's The Comeback Special is out now on CD, vinyl, Deluxe Art Book Box Set and DVD/Blu-ray Mediabook on earMUSIC.

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Geno Washington, shakin' that funky butt on-stage; (inset) hitting the comeback trail.

UK SOUL CATALYST GENO WASHINGTON TAKES IT BACK TO THE SWEATY CLUBS

IT'S THREE in the afternoon when MOJO puts in the call to Geno Washington, the indefatigable soul man with the raspy guffaw. "I only just got up," he says. "All those '60s club shows turned me into Dracula – up all night, sleep all day." One such show, at Harrow's Railway Inn in 1968, inspired a 15-year-old Kevin Rowland, who was in the audience, to take up singing and prompted Dexys Midnight Runners' 1980 Number 1 hit single Geno. "It put a smile on my face," Washington recalls of first hearing the song on the radio, "and it introduced me to a whole new group of people."

It was Little Richard who inspired Geno, born William Francis Washington in Evansville, Indiana in 1943, to sing. "I wanted to capture that same energy and excitement," he says, although it wasn't until after he joined the US Air Force at 18 that he started in earnest. While stationed in East Anglia, one fateful night in Ipswich in 1962 he saw Shane Fenton [later Alvin Stardust] perform. "I went backstage, and asked him, Do you get paid to do this?" says Geno. "He thought I was joking but I honestly didn't know!" On Fenton's advice he sought out London's Flamingo Club. "I said my sister was in Martha And The Vandellas and my auntie was Dinah Washington and they let me sing. A woman threw her knickers on stage and I got paid, and I thought this is the life for me."

> **"I said my auntie was Dinah Washington and they let me sing."**
> **GENO WASHINGTON**

On leaving the service, Washington relocated first to Southend and then to London, from 1965 fronting the Ram Jam Band's soul revue around the UK – "13 shows a week, it was intense". 1966's John Schroeder-produced debut *Hand Clappin' Foot Stomping Funky-Butt... Live!* captured their frenetic stage energy in Pye Studios and hit the UK Top 5. 1967's equally frantic *Hipsters, Flipsters, Finger-Poppin' Daddies* made Number 8. By '69, though, the group had burned out and Washington found himself in the US recording with The Beach Boys. "They hated each other, it was heartbreaking and the material got shelved." Taking time out, he retrained as a hypnotist to return in 1976 with *Geno's Back*, the first of three albums for DJM. After Dexys' immortalisation, he moved back to the UK, tried his hand at acting (he starred in 1995 film Paparazzi and a 2007 episode of Midsomer Murders, among other credits) and wrote 1998 war novel The Blood Brothers, "although music was and is always the main focus," he says. He's now planning a triple-header tour with fellow veterans Cliff Bennett and Zoot Money. "Now that's a bit of a Flamingo Club reunion," he says with a cackle. "It's going to be an old-school party. There'll be no holding back. I'll be like a rat in a cheese factory!"

Lois Wilson

Geno Washington and Zoot Money play London's 100 Club on January 27, 2022.

Getty (2)

GENOROYALE

Geno Washington's packet of three.

Geno Washington And The Ram Jam Band
Hand Clappin' Foot Stomping Funky-Butt… Live!
(PICCADILLY, 1966)

A sweat-drenched supercharge through '60s soul's greatest hits: Uptight (Everything's Alright), (I'm A) Road Runner, Hold On, I'm Comin' and more, recorded live at Pye Studios in front of Geno's fan club.

Geno Washington And The Ram Jam Band
Hipsters, Flipsters, Finger-Poppin' Daddies
(PICCADILLY, 1967)

More explosive 'live club soul in a studio' fun: rough and ready takes on Day Tripper, I Can't Turn You Loose and In The Midnight Hour bring the proverbial house down.

Geno Washington
The Return Of The G
(KOOKOOLAND, 2003)

Washington goes against type with co-writer Sam Maitland on his 2003 comeback outing, embracing Chicago R&B (Blues Master), Latin rock (Walking With The Gods) and something akin to trip-hop with opener Memicelfandi.

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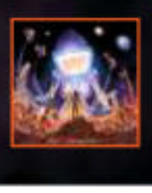

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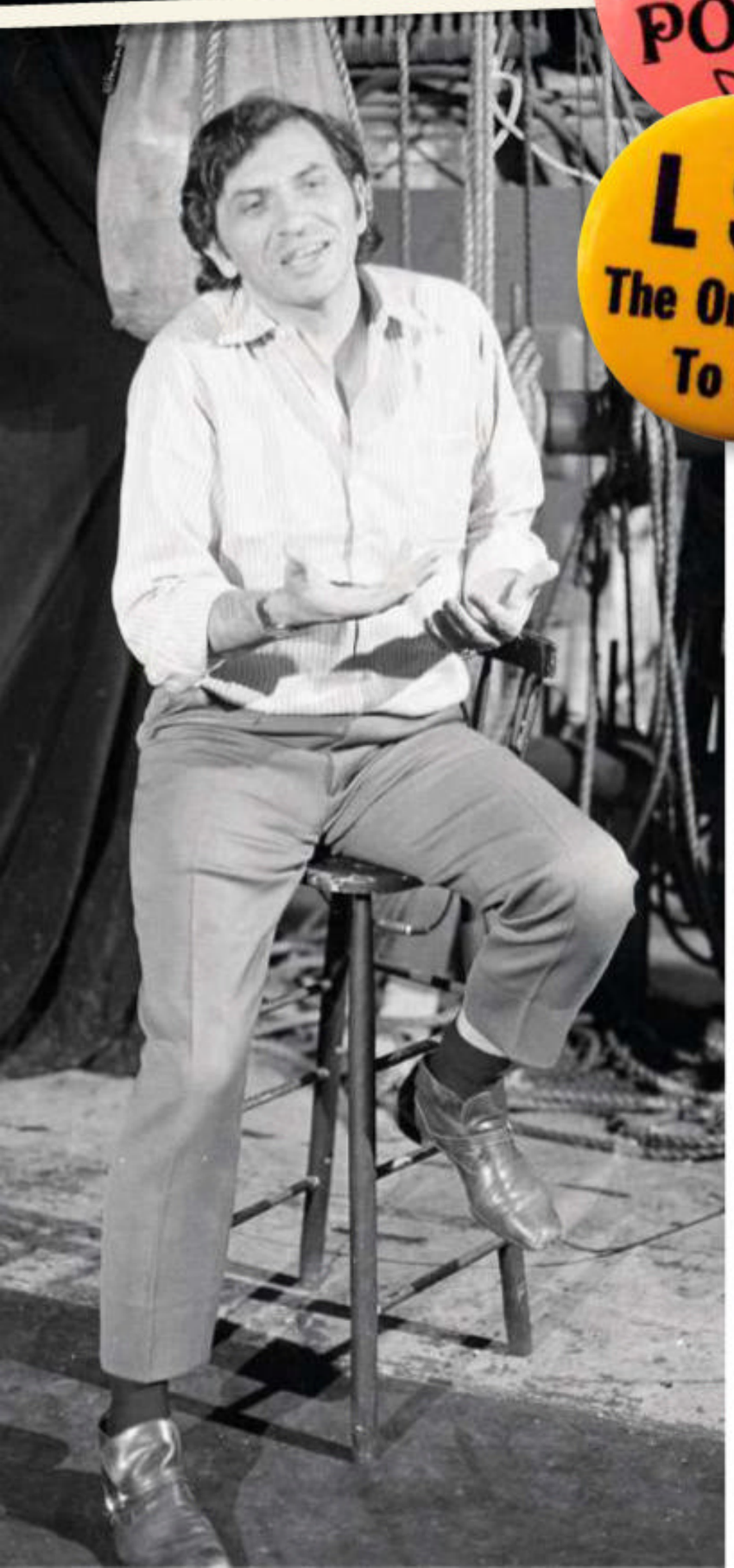
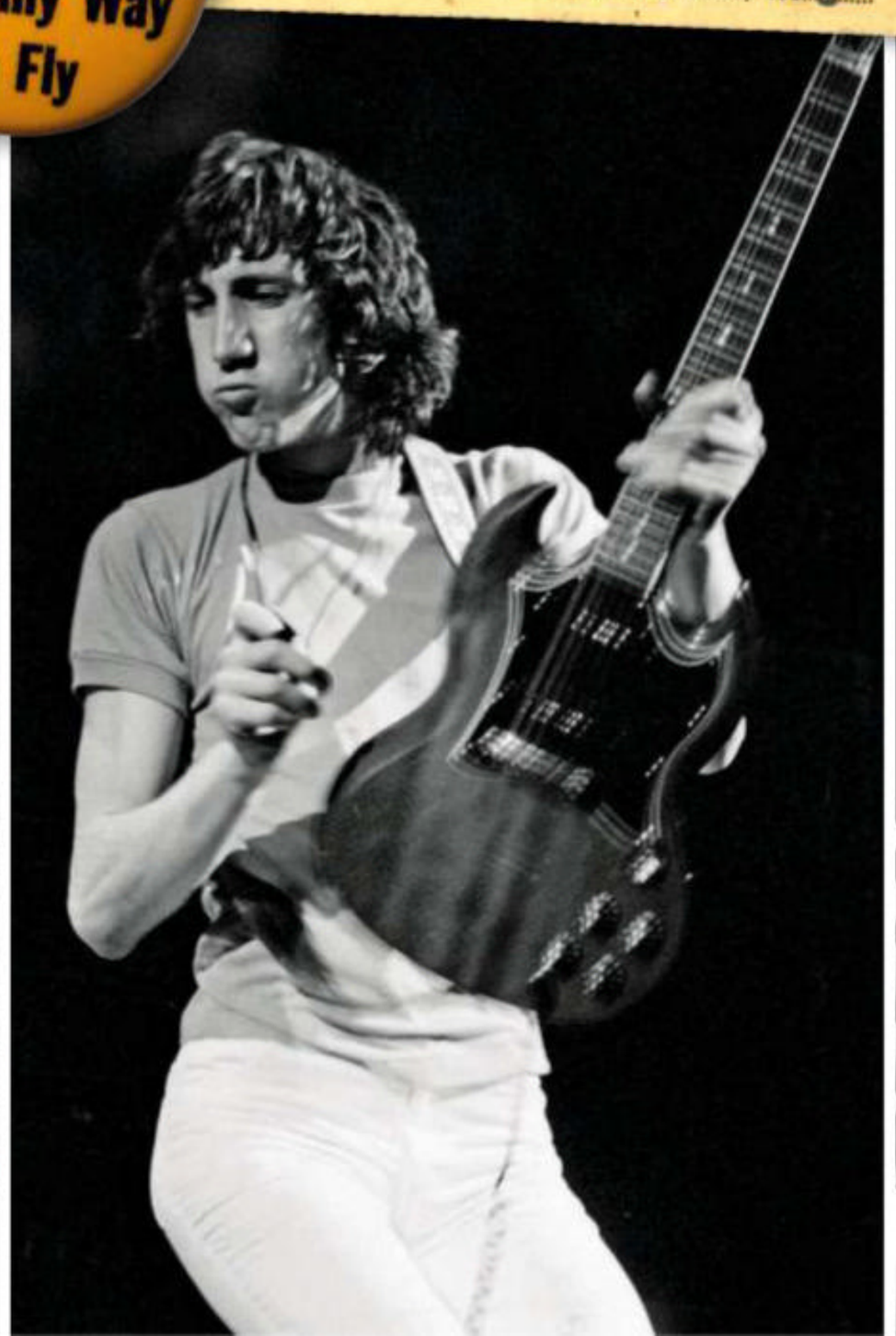




"Please welcome to the stage": (clockwise from left) Jimi Hendrix; Janis Joplin; Blue Cheer; Tina Turner; The Who's Pete Townshend; Bill Graham; Joshua Light Show illuminate; advertising the Fillmore's coming attractions; (insets) band badges, life-style choices, staff pass.

The East Was Rad

Bill Graham's mighty New York venue the Fillmore East, remembered in all its glory.

JOURNALIST AND photographer Frank Mastropolo was still in high school when he went to the Fillmore East – New York's grittier cousin to San Francisco's Fillmore West – on its opening night on March 8, 1968. On the bill promoted by the venue's tough-talking kingpin Bill Graham? "Tim Buckley, Albert King, and Janis Joplin with Big Brother & The Holding Company," says Mastropolo, mentally backtracking to a mythic soundspace of dope smoke, the psychedelic illuminations of the Joshua Light Show and perfect acoustics for rock, blues, jazz and beyond. "The place was packed and buzzing from the start," he says. "It was a revelation."

The young Mastropolo, who'd watched movies at the Fillmore back when it was the Loews Commodore in the early '60s, became a regular, catching three-band/twice-nightly bills to make the music aficionado gawp. Fifty years on from its closure, he's written Fillmore East: The Venue That Changed Rock Music Forever. Containing more than 90 interviews with artists, technicians and other turned-on habitués, it was inspired by 1992's oral history Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock And Out. Mastropolo questioned that book's mere 40 pages on the Fillmore East and decided to act, starting to write in earnest in 2018. "The hall was so important to me that I wanted to collect these stories before no one is around to tell them," he says.

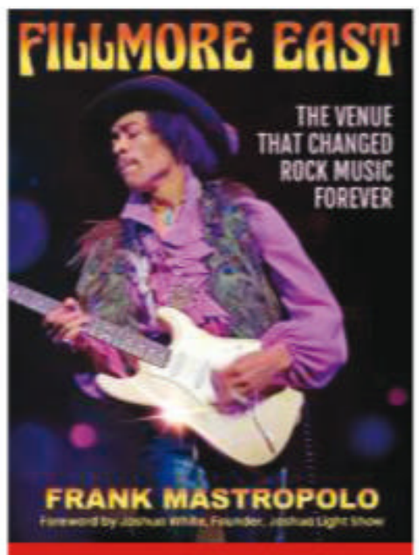
With interviewees including Taj Mahal, John Mayall, Dave Davies, Mark Farner, Terry Reid, Roger McGuinn and many more, the story takes in a magical place at a magical time. There are heavy bills (The Mothers Of Invention with John And Yoko? Miles Davis opening for Laura Nyro?) and many choice recollections. The Moody Blues' John Lodge recalling a 1968 incident when the band's mellotron malfunctioned is one: "The tapes were coming out of the back like spaghetti," he says. "[Keyboard player Mike Pinder] was trying desperately to repair it… I think he just played tambourine and we did the rest of the show like that." Steve Miller, meanwhile, recalls a double-header with Mungo Jerry billed as Miller Mungo (upon leaving the stage Ray Dorset's men threw 500 kazoos into the crowd so they could greet Miller with loud, off-putting buzzing). Mastropolo is particularly pleased with Pig Light Show-founder Marc Rubenstein's memories of Paul McCartney attending a show in disguise. "They had a wheelchair and they put a hat on him and a beard," says Rubenstein. "When the show started, they wheeled him out to the back of the orchestra so that nobody really knew who he was; and between acts, they'd roll him back into the office."

Graham closed the venue on June 27, 1971 with a bill featuring Albert King, J. Geils Band, Edgar Winter's White Trash, Mountain, The Beach Boys, Country Joe McDonald and The Allman Brothers Band (Fillmore poster designer David Edward Byrd recalls the boss saying, "I'm just sick and tired of cleaning up vomit").

However, the book gives a balanced view of the famously temperamental promoter, a refugee from Nazi Germany who died in a helicopter crash in California in 1991, citing his kindness as well as his alchemical way with a bill.

"Graham's volcanic temper is legendary, but staffers say much of it was acting," says Mastropolo. "The Graham I saw on-stage introduced artists with respect and affection. He was an educator as much as an impresario."

Ian Harrison



"The place was packed and buzzing… it was a revelation."
FRANK MASTROPOLO

Fillmore East: The Venue That Changed Rock Music Forever is published by Edgar Street Books. For more info go to: fillmoreeast.nyc

Frank Mastropolo, Dr. Arlene Q. Allen, Jeff Rothstein, Jason Laure. Light show images courtesy of Joshua White, buttons courtesy of Tony Lee, staff pass courtesy James Sullivan.?

> "We said, let's just do a band for fun."
> **RHIAN TEASDALE**

Sofa so good: Wet Leg's Rhian Teasdale (left) and Hester Chambers.

VIRAL MAVENS OF COTTAGE-CORE WET LEG ON THE CHAISE LONGUE.

GOING BY just her first name, Rhian Teasdale spent nearly five years performing as a quirky folk singer *à la* Joanna Newsom, just her and a piano she didn't really know how to play. "Fake it 'til you make it!" she says in her smoky, sing-song speaking voice. But she wasn't making anything, having to take a string of waitressing jobs to sustain herself. Demoralised and lonely on the road, she asked Hester Chambers, an old acquaintance from college on the Isle Of Wight, to accompany her on some dates she was obliged to play before she could call it quits. Though of opposing temperaments – "We're yin and yang" – they enjoyed each other's company and the trip sparked an idea.

"We said, Let's just do a band for fun, so we can go to festivals and get free wristbands. Let's write dumb songs that are really trashy." Their first effort went: "I wanna be a doctor, buy a UFO."

Meanwhile, Rhian found work as a stylist for ads and music videos, which she enjoyed. Two Christmases ago, just before Covid struck, that work suddenly dried up and a proposed two-day visit to Hester's place turned into several weeks sleeping on her chaise longue.

"We went into teenage sleepover mode, watched loads of X Files and Buffy The Vampire Slayer, and had late-night jams, and that's where Chaise Longue came from, that big sleepover sesh." They stored the demo in the 'not for public consumption' folder labelled "High Jams".

But in February 2020, they tried cutting the song with East London producer Jon McMullen. It turned out remarkably well.

Unemployed during the first lockdown, they decided to shoot their own video. In stylist mode, Rhian sourced "cottage core" clothing – Little House On The Prairie outfits and straw hats offset with modern shades – and the pair swapped emotional roles, the habitually shy Hester bouncing around and the usually effervescent Rhian adopting a severe, deadpan look in her smock dress, like a young Judi Dench playing an Amish spy, asking if you'd like someone assigned to butter your muffin. The result was funny, sexy, instant and addictive.

Last summer, Wet Leg (named after random emojis) released Chaise Longue as their first single. Their video went viral. Within weeks, they were being feted by Iggy Pop, Rolling Stone, and other unexpected champions. Suddenly, Rhian and Hester's fun band is serious: "a team of people is plotting our next move."

Where does Rhian see it heading?

"I honestly have no idea. But I'm really excited. Hester and I swing from being, 'This is great' to being total rabbits in headlights. If we can inspire girls to pick up a guitar that'd be amazing. It's so much fun."

FACT SHEET

- For Fans Of: Big Thief, Ty Segall, Bad Sounds, The Chats
- Chaise Longue's "Is your muffin buttered?/Would you like us to assign someone to butter your muffin?" lyric is a quote from 2004 teen-com Mean Girls.
- While working as a stylist, Rhian did the wardrobe for Slowthai's creepy Feel Away video, a wedding reception in a maternity ward.
- The boys in the band, visible in the video for second single, Wet Dream, are Joshua (also Hester's boyfriend) on keyboards, Ellis (another college friend from the Isle Of Wight) on bass and Henry (a former IoW surfing teacher who taught Rhian and Hester on Ladies Night) on drums.
- Their as yet unnamed debut LP is due next spring.

KEY TRACKS

- Chaise Longue
- T-Foz
- Angelica

Hollie Fernando

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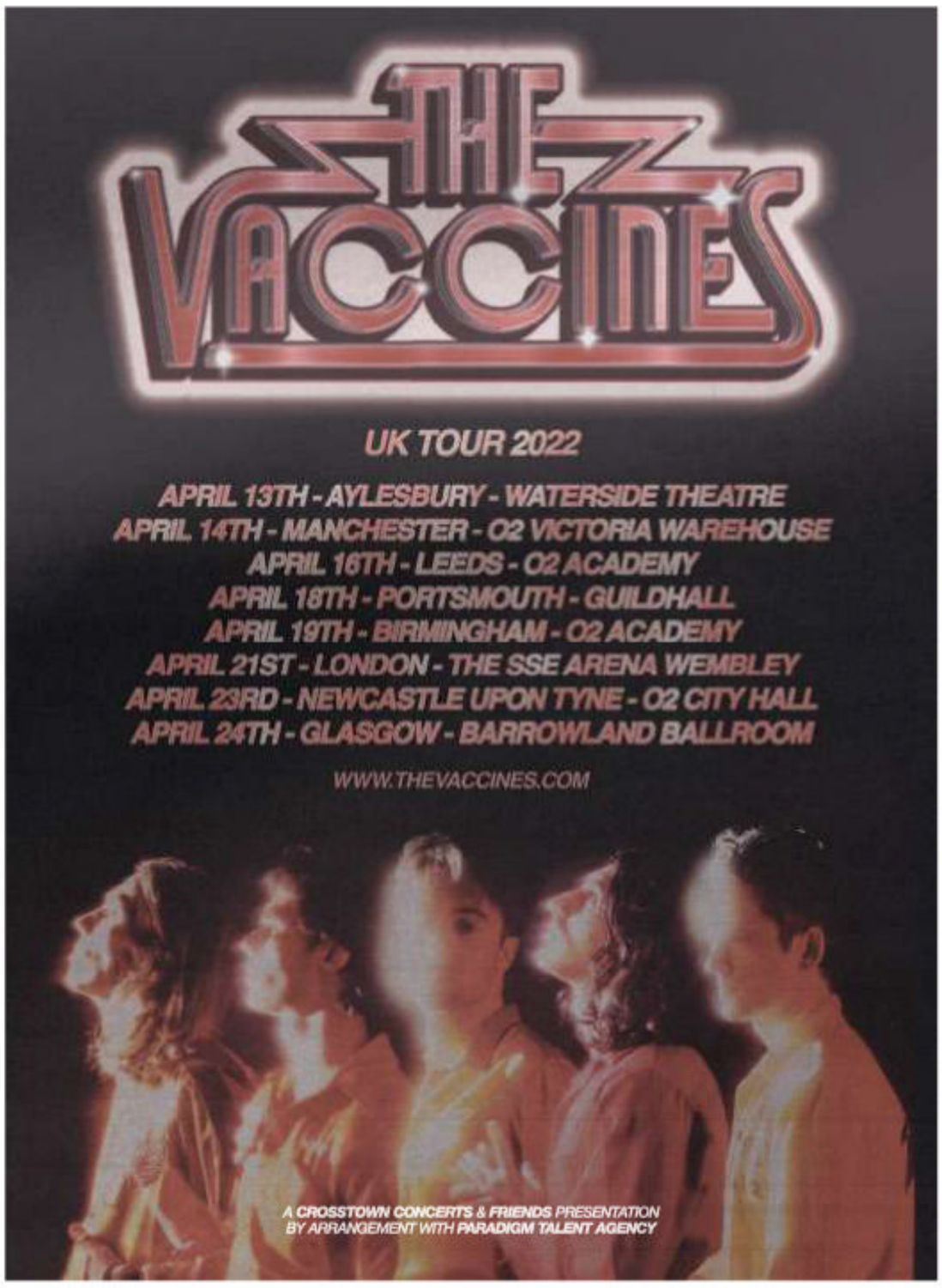

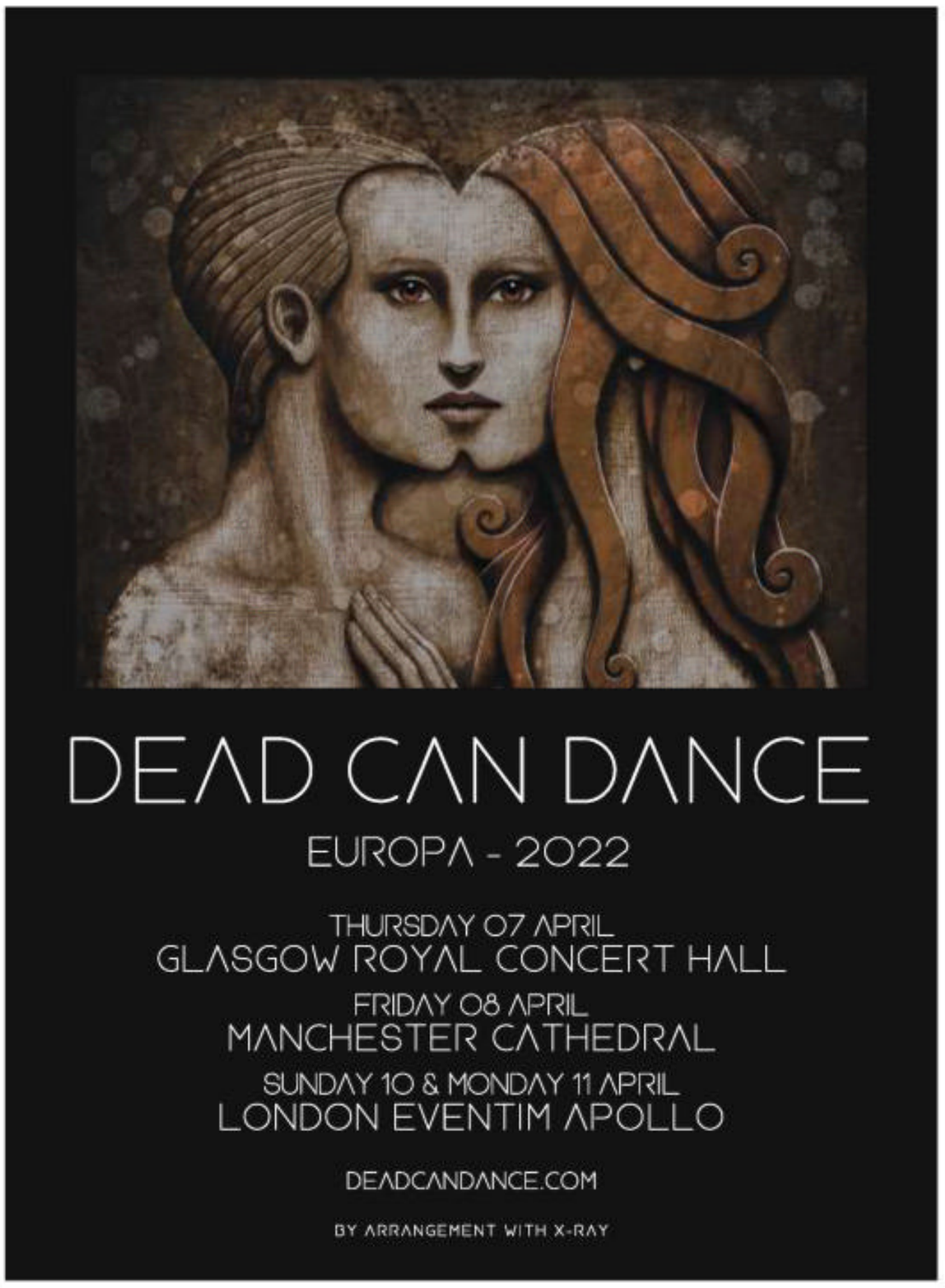

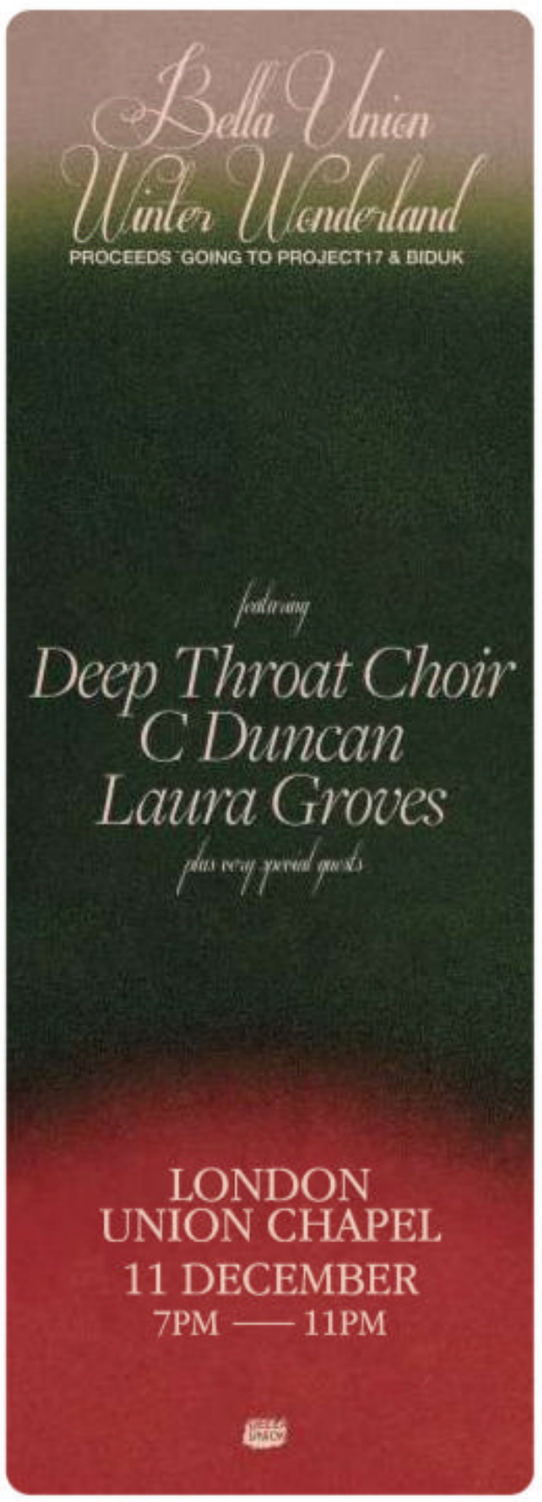

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LIVERPOOL'S DIALECT SPEAKS IN TONGUES OF ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC CHAMBER-JAZZ

IF THERE'S a slight echo to Andrew PM Hunt's voice it's because he's calling from the wooden dome of Bidston Observatory on the Wirral. Built in 1866 and now an artistic research centre, it's where the musician is currently working on ideas for his next Dialect album, the follow-up to 2021's *under~between*, a fluid, delicate, beguiling blend of chamber music, folksy found-sound and jazz miniatures. It's MOJO's Underground Album Of The Year.

"I'm here for the week," he says in his soft-edged Scouse accent, testament to growing up on the Wirral, before moving to Liverpool as a teenager. "I'm experimenting with the acoustics and songcraft. I'm basically spoilt rotten here."

Songcraft has always been at the heart of Hunt's recorded work, ever since his first group, Liverpool quintet Outfit, were fleetingly touted as the next big art-pop thing back in 2011. "Outfit definitely harboured delusions that we might make it," says Hunt. "Always with a cynical Northern edge, but yeah, we definitely wanted to get the music to as big an audience as possible."

> **"We wanted to get the music to as big an audience as possible."**
> **ANDREW PM HUNT**

Wisely investing some of the band's publishing money on building a studio in the house he shared with other local musicians, Hunt started to compose solo music under the name Dialect, music inspired by the sounds that had occupied his childhood.

"My dad played the piano," he explains, "and mum played the trombone. They met each other playing in an orchestra. A lot of those acoustic sounds I grew up with fed into Dialect, along with the more exploratory tracks by bands like Can, Gong and Faust, the ones I'd skipped as a teenager."

An interest in these mid-'70s European music-making collectives has also meant that, for the past 10 years, Hunt has lived in communal arts spaces, first a one-time nursing home, Croxteth Lodge, and now the former Brazilian embassy in Sefton Park, where Hunt is *de facto* caretaker and collaborates with Benjamin D Duvall of Liverpool percussive ensemble Ex-Easter Island Head on his other current music project, Land Trance. It's there that the duo recorded their debut album, 2021's dreamlike, melancholy *First Seance* and its follow-up, *Embassy Nocturnes*, a somnolent collaboration with doom-noir jazz quintet Aging that still retains the trademark stripped-back sound of his Dialect projects.

"That's something I got from listening to late Talk Talk," says Hunt, "where everything is super-dry, no vibrato, you can hear each instrument and there's a real intimacy to it. I've been experimenting with my voice in the observatory, writing lyrics… I'm thinking of bringing in more of that for the next Dialect record but…" He pauses, caught out by his own enthusiasm. "That's a cat that needs to be kept in the bag."

Andrew Male

Speaking your language: Dialect's Andrew Hunt keeps his cat in the bag.

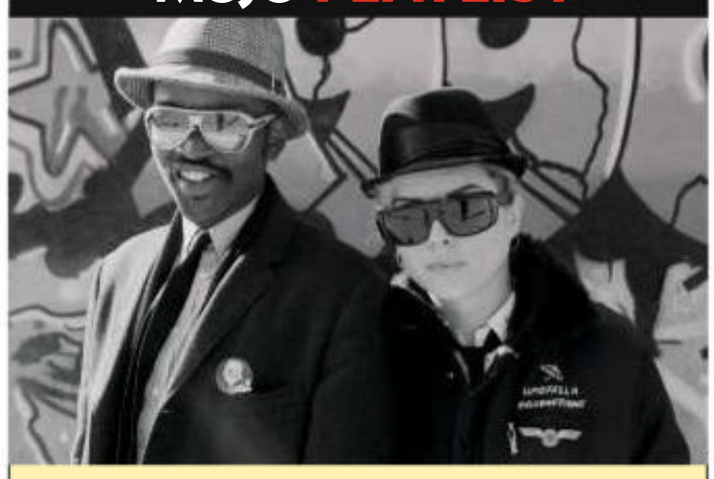
FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Arthur Russell, Talk Talk, Tangerine Dream
- As a teenager, Hunt was a massive fan of the mid-'90s Palm Desert rock scene, including bands like Kyuss and Masters Of Reality. "It was a very localised group of friends coming together and collaborating. That idea totally stayed with me."
- Bidston Hill has particular resonance for Hunt. "It was a place I came to with my friends, got stoned and listened to music in the forest."

KEY TRACKS

- Flame Not Stone
- Under~Between
- Yamaha Birds 1

MOJO PLAYLIST



Dig in! For rock, folk, acid techno and festive rap.

1 BLONDIE/FAB 5 FREDDY YULETIDE THROWDOWN
An early blueprint of Rapture, recorded Christmas-style for the Flexipop 'zine in 1981? The raps have a lot of ding-dong attitude. It's now remixed by Cut Chemist for a vinyl EP.
Find it: *streaming services*

2 JACK WHITE TAKING ME BACK (GENTLY)
JW's solo comeback arrives in two versions: stuttering techno-flash heaviosity and this rinky-dink Hot Club De Nashville rethink.
Find it: *streaming services*

3 TODD RUNDGREN & THE ROOTS GODIVA GIRL
Immaculate '70s soul with Rundgren high-singing goofy lyrics likening his true love to a big ol' box of chocolates.
Find it: *YouTube*

4 JAKE XERXES FUSSELL LOVE FAREWELL
The artful folklorist's new find: a 19th century soldier's goodbye, gently updated. Will Oldham provides backing vox.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 EVE ADAMS METAL BIRD
A creeping unease lurks behind the reverberant beauty of the title track to Californian Adams's Dante-inspired album.
Find it: *streaming services*

6 IMARHAN ACHINKAD
Tuareg rockers build a studio in southern Algeria, and locate their Led Zeppelin *III* moment: serene, ornate, utterly lovely.
Find it: *streaming services*

7 HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF RHODODENDRON
Alynda Segarra's latest concept – a kind of hydroponic *Secret Life Of Plants* – is prefaced by this nagging Lou Reed chugger. The promo video (Segarra in goth drag on a swan pedalo) is definitely a keeper, too.
Find it: *YouTube*

8 YARD ACT LAND OF THE BLIND
Powerfully groovy second single taken off Leeds four-piece's debut: for Fall scholars, fluorescent adolescents, and post-punk two-step shufflers alike.
Find it: *YouTube*

9 HUMANOID ST8818R (A664 MIX)
The 1988 UK acid techno classic gets twisted into minimal new forms by Autechre.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

10 EDDIE VEDDER THE HAVES
Vedder in reflective-guy-at-the-piano mode. Finishes on a crescendo forceful enough to make Elton John reconsider his resignation.
Find it: *streaming services*

Bobby Grossman

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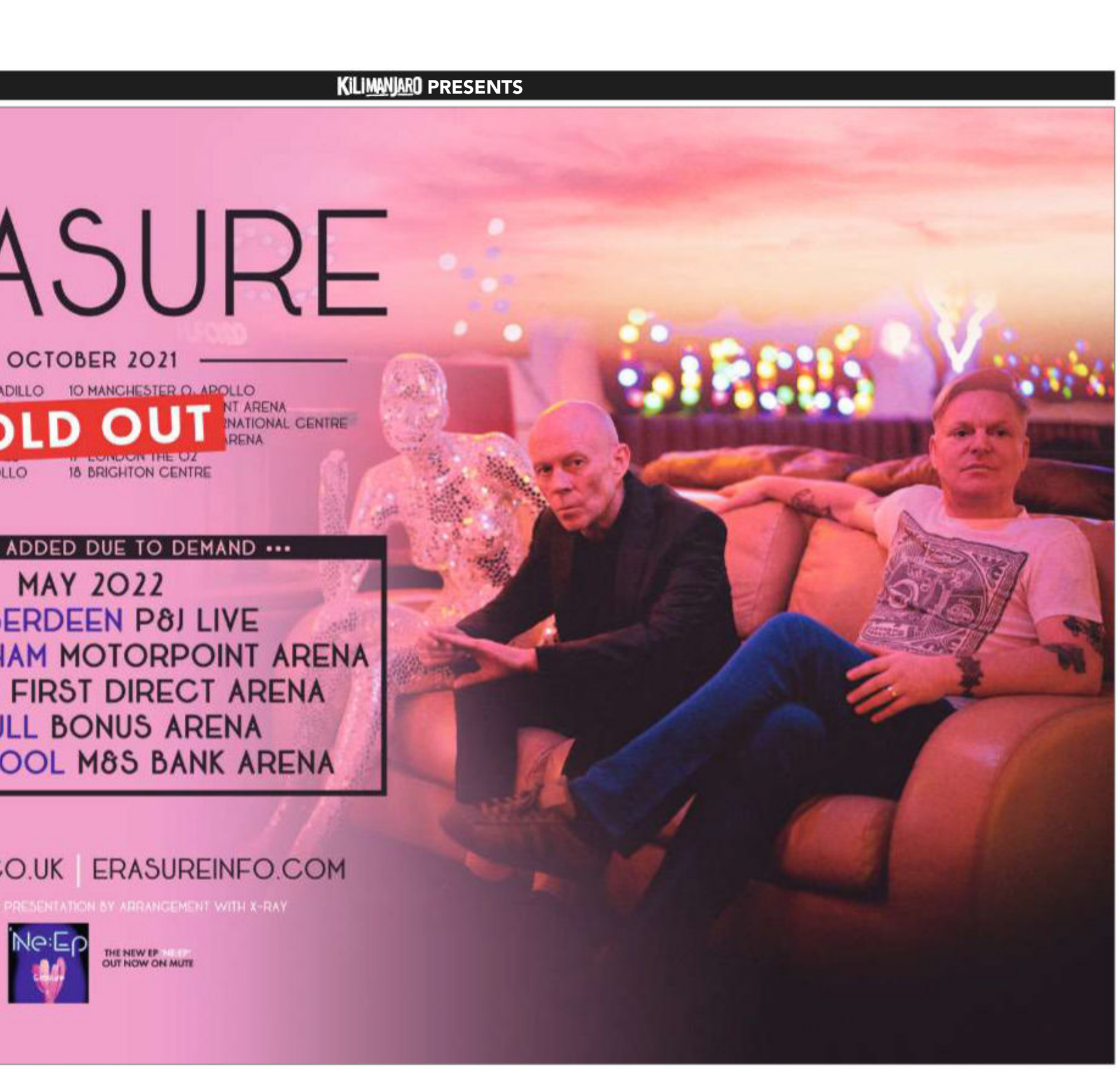

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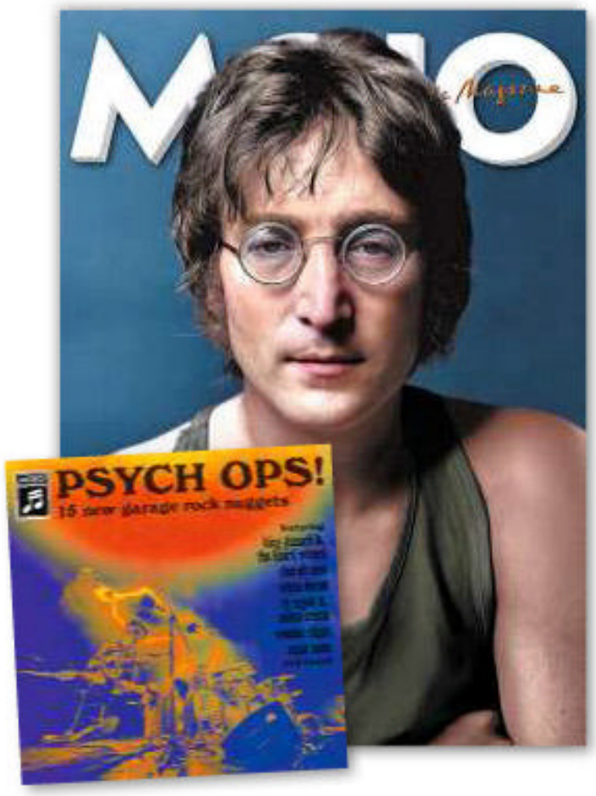

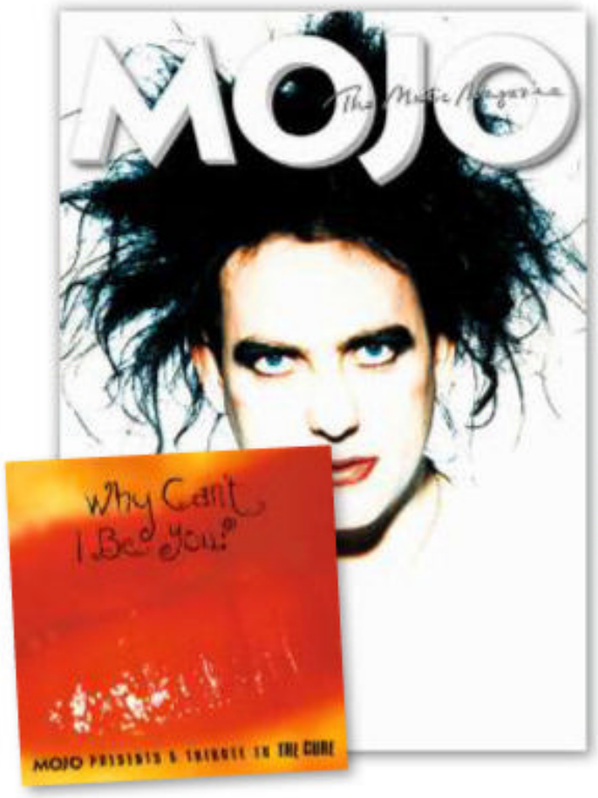

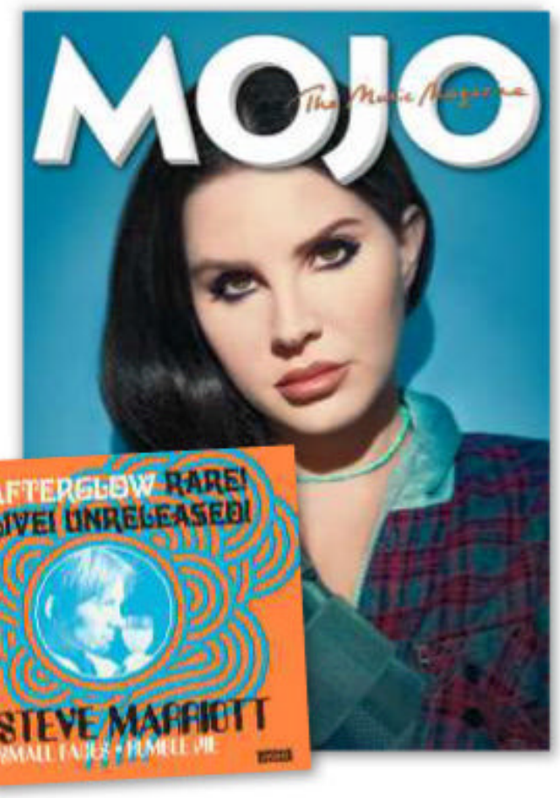

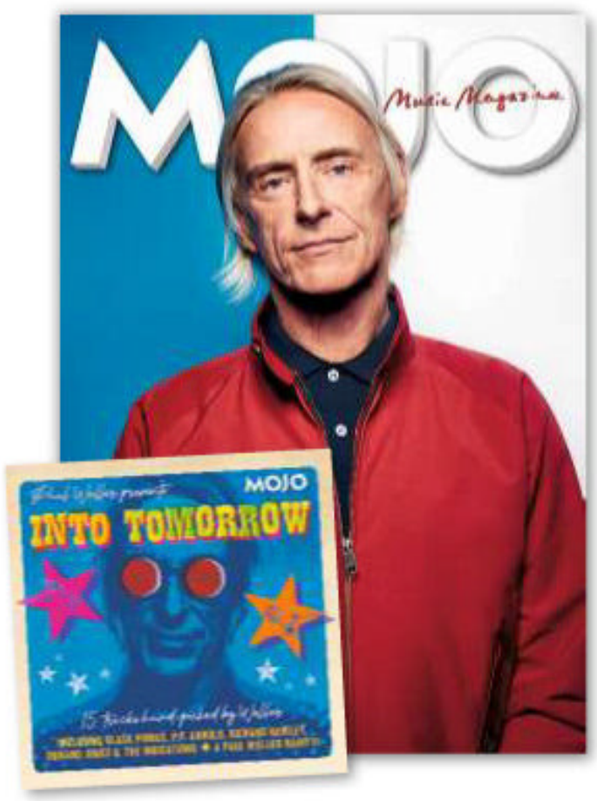

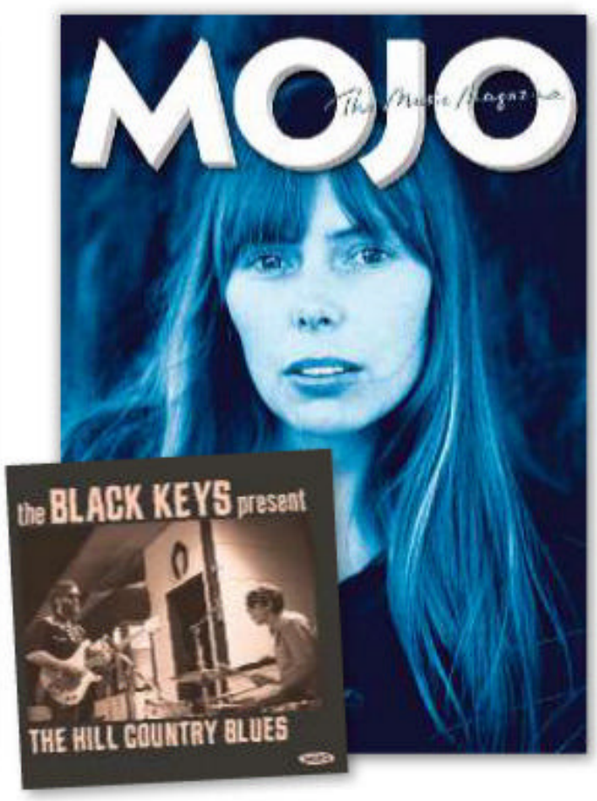

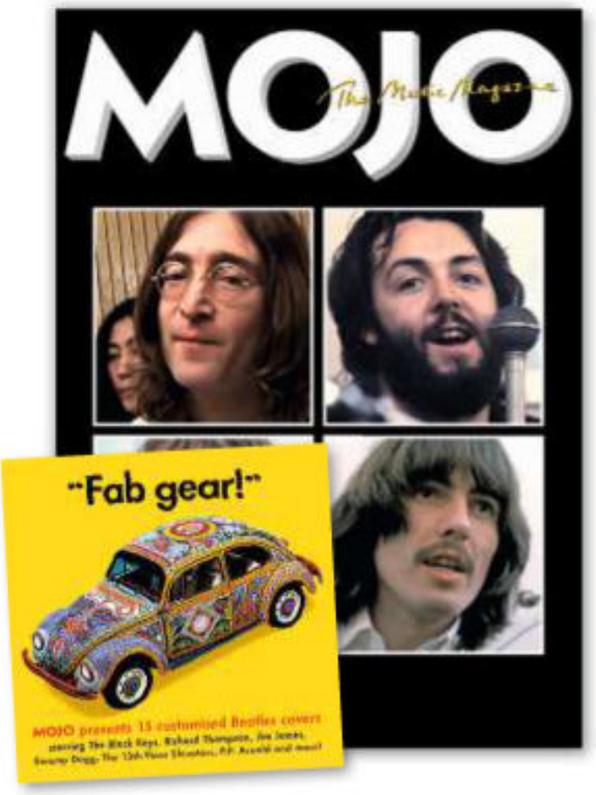

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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

From the edge of heaven **to the brink of death**, music has accompanied **Spiritualized's spaceman-in-chief** to extraordinary places, but **what's *really* going on inside that helmet?** "The songs always seem prescient," says **Jason Pierce**. **"I worry about that."**

Interview by **ANDREW MALE** • Portrait by **TOM OLDHAM**

THE BEST OF 2021

THE ORIGINAL PLAN HAD BEEN TO meet in the crypt cafe of Christ Church, Spitalfields, Nicholas Hawksmoor's 18th century east London edifice with the gothic rocket-style tower. But Jason Pierce arrives at four, just as the crypt is closing, so an alternative venue is found in the upstairs room of a former 17th century coffee-house. The changed location suits Pierce's appearance. At 55, and still teen-skinny in torn, sheepskin-lined jacket, band T-shirt and jeans, the chief executive of Spiritualized® now has the appearance of a handsomely dilapidated Georgian intellectual, albeit one happier to observe than lead a conversation.

Charming, funny and so softly spoken his voice barely registers on MOJO's recorder, Pierce is willing to address all aspects of his singular music career. There's Spacemen 3: the visionary, mythologised group he formed as an '80s teen in the Warwickshire town of Rugby with his friend Peter 'Sonic Boom' Kember, fixating on The Stooges, the Velvets and the power of drones when all three were esoteric concerns. And there's the triad of albums he made in the '90s as Spiritualized, reissued this year to ecstatic plaudits in MOJO and elsewhere. Full of euphoric, transcendent highs and medical lows, they drew strength from the contributions of the group's keyboardist – and Pierce's then partner – Kate Radley, whose departure in 1997 led to a crisis of confidence.

It's a career of obsessional devotion and elusive method that's stirred the admiration of, and led to collaboration with, Pierce heroes including Yoko Ono, Dr. John and Iggy Pop. Yet rumoured dalliances with hard drugs have sometimes garnered more column inches than the music and, in 2005, Pierce nearly died from double pneumonia – a crisis referenced in the title of Spiritualized's 2008 album, *Songs In A&E*.

A jubilantly eclectic *new* Spiritualized LP, titled *Everything Was Beautiful* and slated for release in February, is also on the table. But truth be told, Pierce is happier talking about record shopping, reading Olivia Laing, or going to see 14-year-old Bristol garage-soul-punk situationist, Bruno & The Outrageous Methods Of Presentation. He's also keen to discuss the Covid pandemic. "I was like the End-Is-Nigh guy through it all," he says, with a dry laugh. "I've read an awful lot about the 1918 pandemic, and how the public learned nothing from it. I was kind of saying, This is serious, and everyone was just going, 'Get away! It's just flu.'"

Throughout the lockdown he also walked the deserted streets of London, finding creative inspiration in the routine and repetition. "There's something really beautiful in that," he says. "Walking is like music, like playing the same thing over and over again as an act of creation. It's hard to find a different walk if you live in a city, you follow the same routes but then suddenly, one day, something will happen and you discover somewhere else. A new path opens up. I like that." ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Iggy Pop: in praise of Pierce's hypnopop.

"What you have here is a latter-day classic English rock star. If you erected a wire between Syd Barret and Jimmy Page, Jason would be on that. Have you heard his version of Junior Kimbrough's Sad Days Lonely Nights? His guitar solo is so… wow! His vocals have a quiet, attractive quality to draw you in. His music devolves into hypnotism."

Tom Oldham, Getty

When did you start working on the new album?

Just ahead of lockdown. Then, during lockdown, when people got panicked about being in the same room or travelling on the tube to the studio, we realised we could do nearly all of it remotely. We realised that we didn't even have to go to the studio.

You've said that you felt quite isolated while working on the last album, 2018's *And Nothing Hurt*.

I was. There is something uncomfortable about being locked in with your own music, chasing it around your computer. Tim Holmes from Death In Vegas said it's like painting your hallway through the letterbox with a paintbrush on the end of the a stick. He's right. This new one was recorded in pieces but the trick was to try and create the illusion that it's all in the same room. It's an illusion. But it works.

You've been at this for 30 years with Spiritualized. You must have had a lot of practice at capturing that sense of space, presence…

But I'm also wary of doing what I've done before. My biggest fear has always been of treading water. I know that almost everything I do is built around a cliché, of soul or gospel or whatever, but of not *using* the cliché, trying to find a way of corrupting it or pushing it somewhere. But I also want to avoid making it wilfully abstract. That's the challenge. The hard thing is to hold back, to get to this place where it's not in control, but it's not out of control, where it just hangs in the air. I'd like to think that that's what we strive for.

I love that you've got a song on the new album that's based on country tropes and you've called it Crazy, after one of the most famous country songs of all time. I like the boldness of that.

That was helped immensely by working with [US country singer-songwriter] Nikki Lane. I don't think I would have dared sing a phrase like "I must make amends" had she not been involved. I've always wanted to make a country record. Matthew Johnson at Fat Possum sends me Waylon Jennings records for my imaginary country record but there's something [I don't like about] trying to recapture that old school sound, like that sort of retro-Motown thing, soul music that doesn't seem to have any soul in it.

What was it like revisiting Spiritualized's first four albums? Did you learn anything about yourself, your music?

Well I wanted to reclaim those albums and say they're too important to just be ignored or reissued by people who don't really care about them. They don't make me any money, I've never seen royalties from them. In fact, I'm still paying back the debt on them, but that doesn't mean they should be ignored. Revisiting them, they didn't disappoint. They didn't seem under-thought or undercooked. Even *Let It Come Down*, which I never thought was a success what with the sort of enormity of it, has moments like Out Of Sight that I couldn't have reached without the scale.

I like how the packaging of the new covers are like a product redesign but you've also included the original decayed artwork. That sense of age and history…

Yeah, I mean it's slightly depressing but I love the fact that everything is decay. My records, your writing, that Hawksmoor church outside the window, everything in 100,000 years will be a layer of sediment the thickness of a cigarette. It's all nothing. Art will be forgotten but there's something amazing about making art under those conditions. You've still got to care and put everything into it. I've started buying records again and I've realised that I like my records with the tiny scratches that make them *my* copies. There's something really important in that.

What music did you have when you were growing up in Rugby?

My father left when we were about three. We didn't have money so we didn't have much. We had a Seekers record which I still have. Prokofiev's Peter And The Wolf and my mom had a Barbra Streisand record which I don't remember ever listening to. Other than that my mom listened to the radio. Sing Something Simple. Close harmonies. My first record was Iggy And The Stooges. *Raw Power*. A completely abstract choice. I was 14 and it was just sitting on a rack in Boots, 99p. This beautiful man with this strange look in his eye and that wild-cat jacket on the back. It was almost like I'd found this thing nobody else knew about.

Your mum bought you a guitar when you were seven. Had you already shown an interest in music?

Yeah. My mum showed me the guitar weeks ahead of Christmas because it was a lot of money, like £12, and we were living on £11-a-week benefits between four of us. She wanted to make sure that I really wanted it. My eyes must have lit up. I vaguely remember a few lessons at school then I just hit chords like everybody. There's something really beautiful about that, like learning through repetition.

How big a shift was it meeting Pete Kember at Rugby Art College?

It felt like somebody was obsessive about music in the same way I was. You know, Listen to this, this is the soundtrack to your life. Pete was into The Cramps, Suicide and through Iggy we found The Velvet Underground, Detroit. When you're younger your vision is way narrower and there's something really exciting about that. The 40 records that we had were played to death.

You've said that a lot of great music comes

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Pierce mission: the faces of Jason.

1 Lord can you hear me: the 18-year-old Jason Pierce playing with Spacemen 3.

2 Split personalities: Pierce (left) and Pete Kember, 1991, just before the release of the final Spacemen 3 album.

3 Heart and soul: Pierce with erstwhile Spiritualized bandmate and partner Kate Radley, 1997.

4 Spiritualized in rehearsal at Pierce's house in Rugby, 1991 (from left) Mark Refoy, Jon Mattock, Will Carruthers, Pierce and Radley.

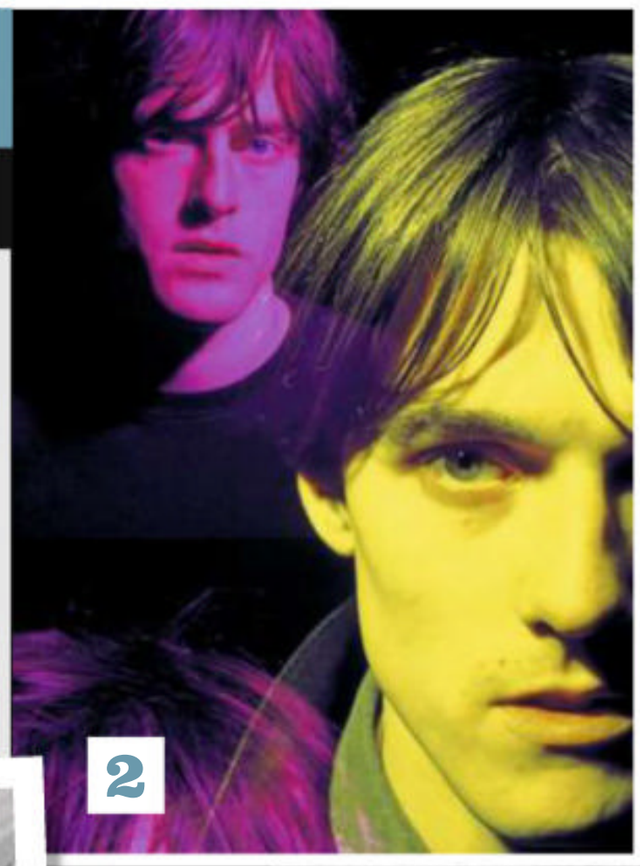
5 Out of sight: Pierce on-stage with Spiritualized at Primavera Sound, Barcelona, June 1, 2012.

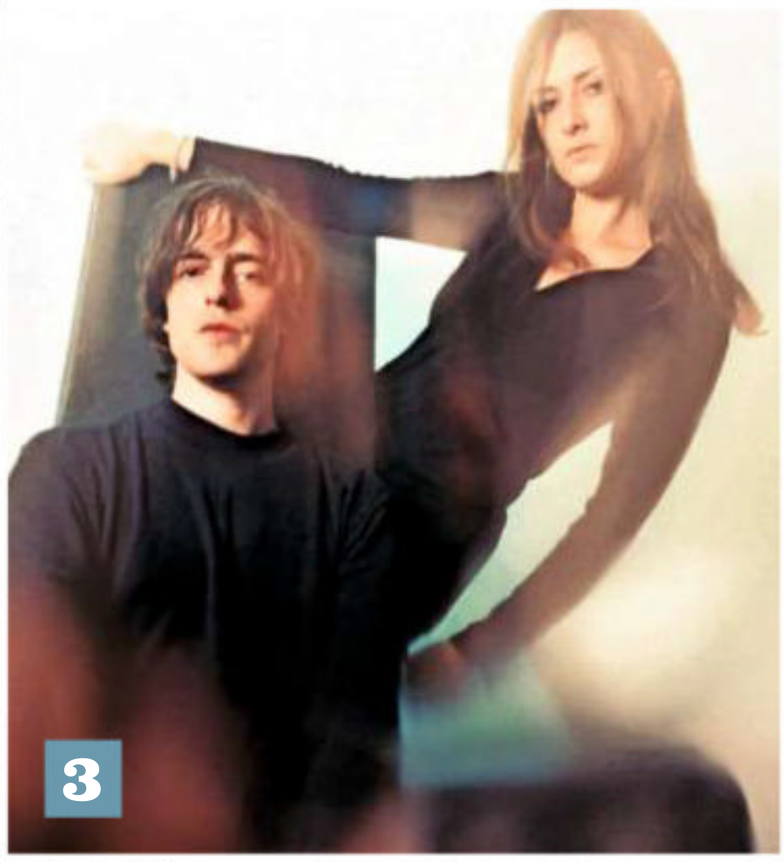
6 Ladies and gentlemen, the perfect prescription: Spiritualized cook something up in the lab in 1997 (from left) Damon Reece, Pierce, Radley, Sean Cook.

7 The doctor will see you now: Pierce enjoying a spot of night tripping with Dr. John at Manhattan Studios, March 3, 1996.

8 Hey, Mr Spaceman: Pierce ready to launch *And Nothing Hurt*, 2018.

9 On the corner: Jason Pierce at the crossroads of 6th Avenue and 49th Street, New York City, 1997.





Courtesy Jason Pierce, Steve Double/Camera Press, Bob Berg/Retna/Avalon, Getty (4)

out of people trying to emulate something and getting it wrong. You wanted Spacemen 3 to sound like The Rolling Stones but you didn't have the temperament or the lung power…

Definitely. That's all that American garage music is. We can be the Stones, but fed through your own culture and ineptitude and you come up with something greater, something beyond that.

You got into stuff like Steve Reich and Michael Nyman much later on but there are parallels between that pulsing minimal Spaceman 3 sound and La Monte Young, Terry Riley. Would you have been listening to that stuff?

We knew the names but I'd never heard the records. It was more that once you put an electric guitar around an E chord and realise you can put multiple E notes on different strings, there's just something absolutely beautiful in that sound. We were initially a little bit more rockabilly, a little bit more Cramps but the more simple it got, the more beautiful and it was almost impossible not to recognise that. There was nothing complicated about what Spacemen 3 did.

I remember reading an old interview where you said Pete's interview approach, of detailing all the drugs he was taking, allowed for no mystery. That it was almost boring. The mystique gets lost.

I just thought it was all a bit unnecessary. I didn't have a solution. Also, with music papers then, there was this kind of illusionary authenticity that people were supposed to possess and they would trip you up and try and find cracks in that. The whole thing was a fiction. I mean, the reality of Spacemen 3 is that it was such a short-lived thing. It burned for such a small amount of time and it was mostly playing to one or two people in small empty rooms. It was only maybe in the last maybe four or five months that we played the Forum, the Mean Fiddler, toured Europe. It came and then it was almost immediately gone. And there was no album where we made something of that. It was a very short fuse that burned bright.

You've said Spacemen 3 split over song-writing credits but it's also about the end of a friendship, isn't it? Then the first Spiritualized album is you rebuilding your self-confidence and realising you can do it by yourself.

"My first record was **Iggy And The Stooges**. *Raw Power*. It was like **I'd found this thing nobody else knew about.**"

I'm still like that. I've got no self-confidence. And it was difficult because with Spacemen 3 *everything* was right. It just clicked. We were moving quite fast in the studio, covering a lot of ground. Spiritualized didn't have any of that. When we did the first album I was listening to Hildegard Von Bingen. Early music. The first tour was almost folk, really stripped back. Sometimes we were barely louder than the audience. Some people were disgusted. I was as shocked as anybody when that first record was well received. I wasn't expecting it.

Kate Radley was a massive driving force in that first incarnation of the band, wasn't she, both in her keyboard sound and in her encouragement?

Massive. Especially the live shows. But also, when you're making music you're your own biggest fan but your own biggest enemy. It was so nice to have another fan who said, "But what you do is so beautiful, what you do is so right." Then once it started to come together with the second album, *Pure Phase*, we found that rock'n'roll thing and we said, "We'll take this as far away from Spaceman 3 as we can."

The design of the Spiritualized albums packaged you like this corporation, a service provider, with you as the faceless head of the company. Is that also a self-confidence thing?

I'm probably more comfortable when it feels like that. I haven't got that kind of confidence. I don't want to say it's inauthentic, but I'm not that kind of person, acting the fool.

Probably the most uncomfortable period of your interviews was around the third album, *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*. You had all these different experiments in music forms and genres on this beautifully packaged concept album, and all people wanted to talk about was your drug intake and whether it was about Kate leaving you [for The Verve's Richard Ashcroft].

Yes, I didn't want to talk about it. Period. But there was no deception. The song Broken Heart was written before any of that happened. It was written as an exercise in how to write that kind of beautifully simplistic country song. But yes it did seem like such a disappointment. All that scope, trying to cover everything that I felt were the most beautiful, important aspects of music.

"I've always struggled. Not failed, just struggled to achieve": Jason Pierce, east London, October 13, 2021.

"The hard thing is **to hold back, to get to this place** where it's not in control, but **it's not out of control.**"

➢ And it just became reduced to this… sad love letter. It just felt demeaning. They dragged it into the mundane. Those records changed my life. They're not a source of pithy one-liners.

Then you had a massive falling out [over songwriting remuneration] with the *Ladies And Gentlemen…* band.

That was really hard because they were amazing. Really difficult. I couldn't understand why. I can't look back and see how anybody else could see me at that time, I can only see me, how I felt within. I didn't understand why they'd done it. Then you try and make a record with a completely new band with none of those interactions or musical taste or anything. It doesn't come with a guide-book. It was really difficult to do that on the back of *Ladies And Gentlemen…* where everything worked and fell into place.

Is that why *Let It Come Down* was so vast, with its 160-odd musicians? Did it become somewhere for you to hide yourself?

Yeah. Probably but not just that. Juliette [Larthe], who made the last Spiritualized video, said, "The only way I can get you in front of the cameras is to put you in that space suit again. You're hiding. There's no 'you' in that space suit." Well, there obviously is but I think she's right. I'm not comfortable with that kind of magnifying glass.

Am I right in thinking that your guitarist John Coxon was also a massive help at this time? Did he restore some of that self-confidence you'd lost?

Yeah. But he brought so much more. He was into a lot of soul music, all the Hi Records stuff. Even the way he plays guitar is like Teenie Hodges. And he and Ashley Wales [AKA Spring Heel Jack] were big into drum'n'bass at that time – which sounded like Sun Ra or something to me.

We took Ashley to America with us to DJ at the tail end of the Ladies And Gentlemen… tour. We'd go on stage after he'd played Miles Davis, so we had to bring an extra something. It was such a massive learning curve.

I read somewhere that 2003's *Amazing Grace* was originally going to be another massive grand album, but became this more stripped-down, unrehearsed thing after you started listening to The White Stripes.

There was a definite intention to not rehearse, to introduce the band to songs on the day, to be conceptually vague – something the polar opposite of *Let It Come Down*. I get confused because I lost an album around then; I left a whole set of demos in a taxi in Greece.

Tom Oldham

Amazing Grace was just about this immediacy of ideas but some of it was… I think it was lost on a lot of people. I still think Rated X is a beautiful song. One of the last sounds that went down on that was Kenny Wheeler's trumpet. It's just a small refrain at the end but it just makes the whole record.

You were hospitalised with pneumonia in June 2005. What do remember of that?

You know what? I don't remember getting ill. I just remember being outside of John [Coxon]'s house in east London and we'd a couple tins of beer and I just said, I've got to sit down. And he just said, "Let's get you to the doctor's." And the doctor said, "Let's get you straight to hospital." And that night my lungs packed in. So there's no kind of warning. In fact, the day before we'd been recording with The Dirtbombs for the track Yeah Yeah [on *Songs In A&E*]. I was very ill and I was very lucky. The only clear part of my lung was above my collarbone. The rest was white liquid. I was breathing one breath a second for nine days. Just very ill but tougher for the people that picture the loss. Death isn't really about the dead is it – it's about the living. Then I had to go back to the album when I came out and it was all alien, trying to reconnect with this other something that had to be finished.

Did the songs seem prescient?

They always seem prescient. I worry about that. Broken Heart was prescient. Death Take Your Fiddle was prescient.

Those ventilator sounds weren't on the original version though?

No, some of the breathing things, the use of the squeezebox without any keys was put in afterwards. I mean, I think most people would have just said, "I've been ill, release it as it is." But I can't do that. You get one shot at this and you have to put everything into it, every bit of information. I have to be exhausted by it but I have to exhaust *you* as well so I can say, OK, this is done. They're always hard to finish. Because, could they be better?

Which is odd, as probably the most unfinished project you've ever done was the one you were happiest with: the score for Harmony Korine's movie, Mister Lonely.

Yeah. I loved doing that. I don't get enough of that sort of work. You don't have to front it. You're working to the instruction of somebody else. I've not been asked to do nearly enough soundtracks. I did meet [Matrix directors] the Wachowskis with a view to doing soundtracks for them but then I got ill. In fact, at the end of their [2005 film] V For Vendetta, they put [*Let It Come Down*'s] Out Of Sight over the end credits, just as a way of getting me some cash because they knew I'd been ill. A kindness on their part.

Two years on from *Songs In A&E* you returned to *Ladies And Gentlemen*… and toured it live. Did that feel weird? The industry had changed so much in the years since you recorded that…

Yeah. It was fortunate that we were in the industry at a time when we could realise all of those ideas in the studio. And we spent all the money. That was the other thing. It was quite amazing. "I'd like to fly to New York and go to a proper old-school recording studio and record Dr. John." "OK." And someone was picking up the bill. And it was us! Which is kind of amazing. There's no regrets. There was no thought that I'd make money from that and there was no thought that I could make that money back by reforming or touring *Ladies And Gentlemen*…

Around the time of recording *Sweet Heart Sweet Light* (2012) the papers wrote that you underwent "experimental chemotherapy for liver disease" Is that right?

Not really. I had hep C. The drugs were interferon and ribavirin which were originally drugs used as treatment for certain cancers, yeah, but I wouldn't want to compare it to chemotherapy. Ribavarin is not a good drug to be on. You feel like your whole world is two centimetres back from reality. You can't always read the logic of situations. But the drugs worked. They did what they were meant to do.

After that, how was it going back to making the album?

Well, there's that idea that you learn from those kinds of experiences. You come back changed, more charitable or whatever. I just felt the same: same problems, same hang-ups, same strange thought-processes that I had before. Not a disappointment, but you feel like these should be the moments that turn you, you know…

You were disappointed that you didn't have a religious experience?

Kind of, yeah.

You've talked about the atmosphere of hospitals, that weird antiseptic aura, the sound of the air and everything feeding into your music around this time.

Yeah. There's something oddly beautiful and tragic and strange about that. In the movies you always see really sick people in hospital in a room on their own but you're not. You're in a room with six or seven people and all the heart monitors and sounds of their machines are going off at different rates and it's odd and strange and you're so out of it, concentrating on trying to stay alive, that there's just something really beautiful about it, although beauty might be the wrong word. But, yes, *Songs in A&E* and *Sweet Heart Sweet Light* they're both connected to getting ill and hospitals and medicine and all that as an art form: steel and glass, antiseptic, the minimalism of that kind of world where everything has a very distinct function, and there's nothing additional, nothing unnecessary. You know that if you're in a hospital everything's there for a reason and everything has been designed for that reason.

There's six years between *Sweet Heart Sweet Light* and *And Nothing Hurt*. You've talked about suffering from writer's block in the past.

Well, I'd started recording with Youth. He offered help and I was quite happy to try it. I thought, Why not? But gradually it got more and more controlling and he just started blocking my record in – like, These are the blocks labelled 'Spiritualized' and you block them together and you make a Spiritualized album – and it just seemed so unsatisfactory. It wasn't like it was news to anyone that I don't want to just throw in a whole load of Logic tambourines and kettle drum sounds. So I said it wasn't working and he held onto the tapes. That was the first of a series of time-consuming things, and then when I got the tapes back I just thought, I don't want this anymore, so I started again.

What were the other setbacks?

Well, all the tracks on the new album were originally put down at the same time as *And Nothing Hurt* with the intention to do a double LP. And it was too big. Nobody wanted it. [Fat Possum's] Matthew Johnson was saying, It doesn't matter how beautiful and big it is if it's too much for people to hear. Sure, we could make a great double album that in 20 years time, people'll say, Wow, we missed that one. That just slipped through. But Matthew wants success now. Not for himself. He's got success. He wants success for me. I've always struggled. Not failed, just struggled to achieve. And he's right. Just by sort of separating the two, finishing one album, then making the other one, was the smartest thing to do.

When you released *And Nothing Hurt*, you talked of it being possibly your last album, and that you were quite ready to walk away from it all. Do you still feel like that?

No. I've written a lot through lockdown. It no longer feels like I've got to finish something. It's good. It feels like I've got to start something again.

GALAXY QUEST

Three heavenly bodies from the eternal J. Spaceman. By **Andrew Male**.

THE IGNITION

Spacemen 3

★★★★★

Playing With Fire

(FIRE, 1989)

Recorded as the band began its protracted disintegration, this is the pinnacle of the Spacemen 3 drone rock sound, an alchemical transformation of Jason Pierce and Pete Kember's creative misery into exquisite euphoric melancholy. Songs such as How Does It Feel? and Lord Can You Hear Me? blend English LSD whimsy with elemental gospel tropes and eerie melodic purity, while Revolution exists somewhere between the summer of '67 and the student riots of '68.

THE LIFT-OFF

Spiritualized

★★★★★

Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space

(DEDICATED, 1997)

"What is Spiritualized used for?" read the prescription that came with the album's original pharmaceutical-style packaging. "Spiritualized is used to treat the heart and soul." A 70-minute experiment in the forms of gospel, soul, country and rock'n'roll as methods of pain relief and psychedelic release. Chaotic, beatific, visceral, and transcendent – too vast in its scope and achievements to be mistaken by anyone sensible for a mere break-up album.

THE SPLASHDOWN

Spiritualized

★★★★

Songs In A&E

(COOPERATIVE MUSIC/SANCTUARY, 2008)

The first in Pierce's infirmary diptych, joined by *Sweet Heart Sweet Light* some four years later. Although composed largely before his near-death encounter with double pneumonia, in its post-production use of ventilator sounds, the angelic 'Harmony' interludes, Pierce's audibly frail vocals, and prescient numbers Death Take Your Fiddle and Don't Hold Me Close, it is an album suffused in the pale terminal light of sweet goodnights and final resting places.

More than a new singer-songwriter: Laura Nyro thinks it over, Boston, Massachusetts, May 25, 1972.

Better Hide

Don't cry for *Laura Nyro*, the singer-songwriter who launched a legion of smash-hit covers but whose own albums only inched into the charts. For over 40 years, she turned pain into art into self-knowledge and, as her friends and collaborators insist, victimhood never looked good on her. "She did what she wanted," they tell **Dave DiMartino**.

Portrait: **David Gahr**

IT IS MIDDAY AND MID-YEAR 1998 in well-to-do Brentwood, California. At the moment, I am sitting across a table from none other than Ms Joni Mitchell, who is discussing the treatment she is getting from the press these days. The routine: names of contemporary female artists are run by her – Alanis Morissette, Sheryl Crow, Jewel, say – and she is asked to assess the artistic worth of each. It is the era of the all-female Lilith Fair, and Joni Mitchell, coincidentally a female, is well known for her outspoken opinions. And the press, of course, wants *dirt*.

"I'm sick of being lumped in with the women," says Joni. "*Laura Nyro* you can lump me in with – because Laura exerted an influence on me. I looked to her and took some direction from her. On account of her, I started playing piano again. Some of the things she did were very fresh. Hers was a hybrid of black pop singers – Motown singers – and Broadway musicals, and I like some things also from both those camps."

"And," I note, "There is that record *New York Tendaberry*."

"Beautiful record," says Joni. "Beautiful."

THE RECENT *AMERICAN DREAMER* BOX, which collects the extraordinary recordings Nyro made from 1967 to '78 and, song by song, details her artistic worth, bears out every ounce of Mitchell's admiration. Those who like to go by numbers alone might look at the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the week of ➢

Photo by David Gahr/Getty Images

Your Heart

➤ November 29, 1969 for three Top 10 entries of note: Blood, Sweat & Tears' And When I Die (Number 2), The 5th Dimension's Wedding Bell Blues (Number 3), and Three Dog Night's Eli's Coming (Number 10). All compositions by Laura Nyro, all seared into America's music psyche, and as telling in its own way as that week in 1964 when The Beatles had five of the Top 5 entries in the same chart.

Though the Bronx-born singer-songwriter, born Laura Nigro, lived a regrettably abbreviated life – she died of ovarian cancer, just as her mother did, in 1997 – much had gone on in her 49 years. There was the Verve album deal that produced 1967's *More Than A New Discovery* and introduced And When I Die, Wedding Bell Blues, and Stoney End (a later Top 10 hit for Barbra Streisand). There was the mixed reception she received at 1967's Monterey Pop Festival, which had significant impact on her enthusiasm for live performance. And there was that time when current billionaire and über-biz magnate David Geffen entered the picture.

"I heard [*More Than A New Discovery*] and I loved it," a very young Geffen told the National Education Television's Critique TV series in 1969. "I was stunned at all the insight that she had. It was more of an experience than I'd ever had listening to an artist. I called up her manager [Artie Mogull], the man who was handling her at the time and I said, 'Your client is unbelievable.' And he proceeded to put her down terribly.

"I thought to myself how *awful* that this poor girl was, you know, being managed by someone who had no respect for her at all. And I finally got to meet her, and she was very innocent – a very, very innocent young girl who really couldn't take care of herself. All she could do was create. And I told her that I wanted to help her, and she needed help."

And Laura Nyro? She was a singing baby who began writing poetry and playing the piano at the age of five. "It just became a thing, and it was my little world," she said on that same Critique show. "Sometimes I'd just be in my room, totally tuned out, or totally tuned in to my own thing – because in my world I could look at my pain and it wasn't ugly to me. It was a matter of understanding it, and channelling it into a beautiful thing. Because I think pain is something that can do two things to a person – I think it can sometimes shatter a person, destroy them, *or* they can grow from their pain, they can become a greater person from their pain, I believe."

Nyro's pain was that of the hyper-sensitive adolescent who didn't fit the culture's idea of young womanhood, even the evolving one of the '60s. Her songs could be startlingly sensual or carry an acute sense of the fragility of romantic love. Others sounded like they were written in trance states – what does she mean by "surry down" in Stoned Soul Picnic, her classic from 1968? Only Nyro knew, if even she did – and come off as notes to self rather than communications sent into the world.

"When I sit down to write," she told Downbeat magazine in 1970, "there ain't nothin' but me and the piano. I know that there are a lot of people who write for a market. I can't do that… that's out. When I sit down at the piano, I don't think about other people…"

It may have been convenient for David Geffen and others to perceive her as an innocent abroad, "needing help". But the fact remained: Laura Nyro was not as other artists.

DAVID GEFFEN WAS ALSO the agent of Janis Ian, the singer-songwriter who'd penned and had a hit with Society's Child in 1967 at the age of 15, and was also signed to Verve. Like Nyro, she attended the High School Of Music And Art in Manhattan, but was two years younger. They would become good friends.

"Verve had made it their business to sign up everyone in Greenwich Village they thought would fail," recalls Ian today. "It turned out to be a tax loss for the company.

"So they signed up Richie [Havens], me, the Blues Project, Laura. Oh gosh, just a host of us. But that was great, because they left Jerry Schoenbaum, the president of the company, alone. So when it came to my Society's Child or publicising Laura's album, Jerry had free rein, and he believed in the records. He believed that they were worthy."

One of the things that struck Ian about Nyro then, and even now, was "her absolute loyalty to her friends. Because I invited her to dinner at the apartment my boyfriend and I were sharing, and I said, 'The only thing I know how to cook really is spaghetti with Hunt's tomato sauce,' and she said, OK, great – she ate that, and she ate tuna fish. So either one was fine.

"And so she showed up at the door with a TV. And in those days, you didn't have tiny TVs. She had like a *full* TV, and I said, 'Laura, we *have* a TV – you're welcome to watch it.' And she said, 'Well, I wanted to watch Mod Squad,' because it was premiering and her friend Peggy Lipton was in it, and she wanted to make sure she didn't miss it. And I just thought that was so cool – because they were friends, and she was going to do her friend this solid and watch the show. So we all watched The Mod Squad while we ate spaghetti."

David Geffen was loyal, too. And sharp. That Nyro had entered into her existing management and recording contracts while a minor allowed her to file suit and void them. Geffen was named her manager and they jointly formed Tuna Fish Music, Inc., the publishing company that would control all her copyrights. Then it was time to go shopping – for label deals, publishing deals, and more.

Famously, Columbia Records president Clive Davis had been in the audience at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival and had not been impressed by Nyro. "It was not a stellar appearance by anyone's criterion," he recalls today.

Still, Davis says, he wasn't closed to the notion of signing Nyro to Columbia. Later, in New York: "We did have an audition at Columbia Records that David Geffen had arranged, and I approached that totally not with any pre-existing attitude. I remember that she asked that the lights be turned off. We saw her in

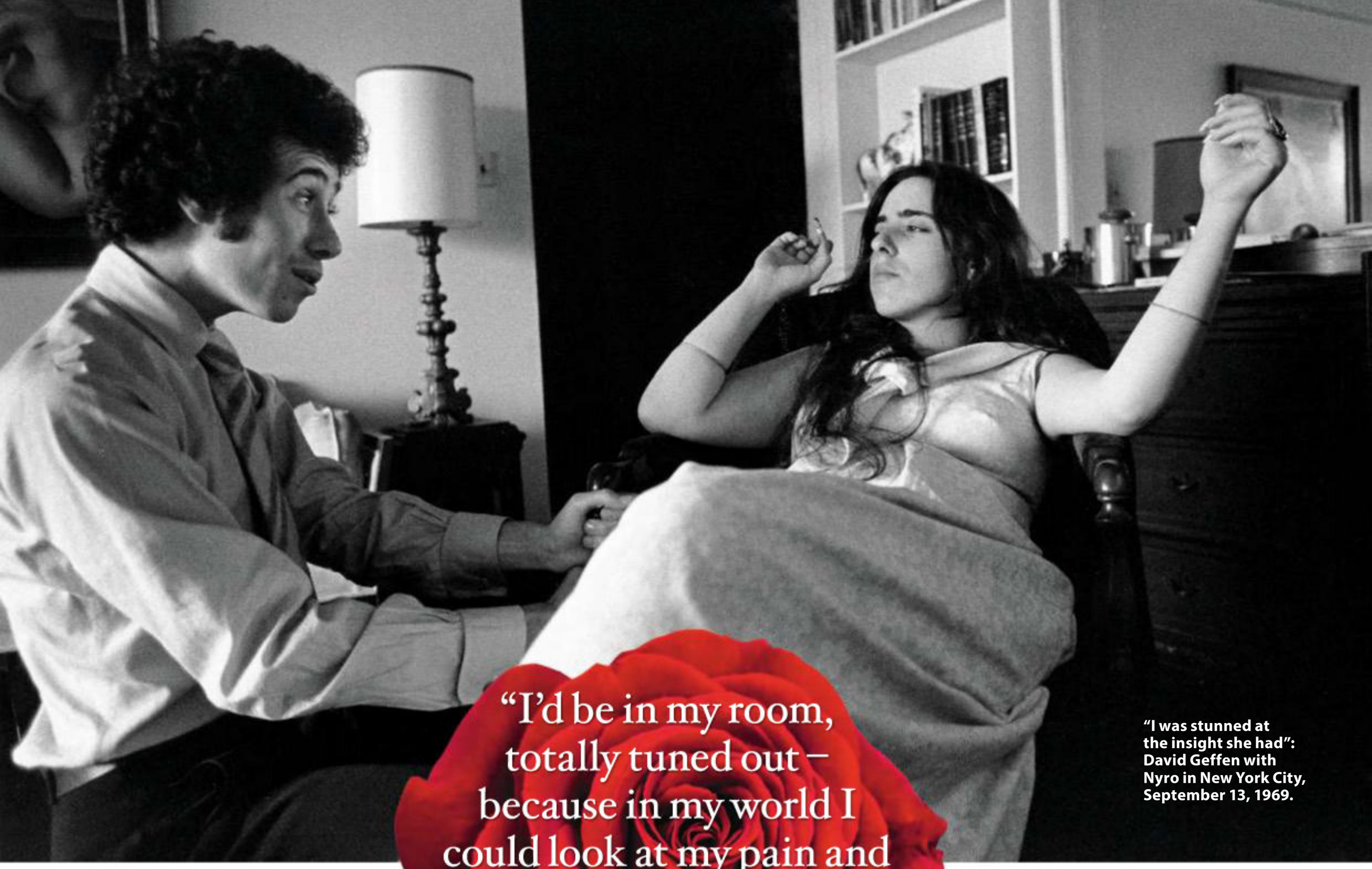
"She Was A Really Great Teacher"

RICKIE LEE JONES on her love for Laura Nyro.

"Laura Nyro was like a cord that came out and attached itself to me. I recognised my direction in Laura Nyro. She was like nothing else of that time. I fell in love with her and in doing so loved myself a little more. I can see people not feeling related to her music because it had a kind of Broadway thing, and she sang a little out of tune. But all the things about her made me love her more – her flaws and her courage to have flaws. I think of her as being a really great teacher. And a great teacher is one you don't get stuck in, you pass through and it sticks to you like pollen. They're pollinators."

The pollinator: Nyro in the studio, late '60s.

Getty (5)



"I was stunned at the insight she had": David Geffen with Nyro in New York City, September 13, 1969.

"I'd be in my room, totally tuned out – because in my world I could look at my pain and it wasn't ugly to me."

Laura Nyro

the light of the television set that was there. It was definitely a very semi-dark, flickering light. An audition just by the glow of a TV set."

Fast forward to a done deal, to Nyro and Geffen looking for a producer for her Columbia debut, and a meeting one night between Davis and staff producer Charlie Calello, a skilled arranger and producer who had previously worked with The 4 Seasons, Lou Christie, and The Cyrkle, among others.

"I went into Clive's office and I told him how disenchanted I was working at Columbia," Calello recalls today, "because I wasn't really doing what I was hired to do. He said he'd just signed Laura, and would I like to meet with her manager? And I jumped at the opportunity."

Another audition would follow within days, but this time it would be Calello under the microscope. It took place at Nyro's one-bedroom apartment on 8th Ave and W 52nd St.

"I went up there and it was me, David and Laura," he says. "The place was lit softly with candles. There was a spinet piano there. We spoke for a few minutes. Then she played me the entire *Eli* album from start to finish. And when she was finished with it, I was speechless. I couldn't talk. I was absolutely, *absolutely* blown away. And I realised at that point that what I had just heard was going to change my life. When I responded, I couldn't speak, I literally could not speak."

THE ALBUM WOULD BE CALLED *Eli And The Thirteenth Confession*. It would be released in March 1968 and would come with an enclosed, perfumed lyric sheet. Containing Stoned Soul Picnic, Sweet Blindness, and Eli's Comin' (Three Dog Night added a "g"), it is, for many, the ultimate expression of Nyro's art: perfectly crafted songs, exquisite arrangements by Charlie Calello, a unique merging of R&B, pop, the glimmer of Broadway musicality Joni Mitchell herself noted years later, and a cast of characters – names, places and images – in its way, a New York version of *Astral Weeks*, but with more pop hooks.

"I think of my albums as a lifeline," Nyro told writer Chris Albertson later that year. Her songwriting, she said, was a words first/music later process of sculpting and resculpting. "Eight months will go by and I've written 10 songs, and, for some reason those 10 songs form a circle and it's a very natural process."

For Nyro, songwriting was laborious, and record-making no different. Charlie Calello notes that album budgets in that era typically ranged between $12,000 to $15,000, and when the $30,000 mark had been reached before *Eli*'s completion, he started getting heat from the label.

"I had one more session to finish three of the songs," Calello recalls. "And she freaked out and was in the studio in tears telling David I was 'ruining' her music. So he said to me, 'Charlie, what do you want me to do?' I said, 'You need to get her outta here so I can finish these records.'

"So he took her out and about two-and-a-half hours later, they came back. She listened to what I did. She was like a little ➢

They surry down: (from top) Janis Ian, Joni Mitchell and Charlie Calello.

Nyro's comin': Laura in New York, 1968, around the time of *Eli And The Thirteenth Confession*.

> "I would say she was the purest artist I've ever met in my life. She just wanted her vision put on tape."
>
> *Felix Cavaliere*

child: 'Oh, Charlie, I *love* it, it's wonderful, I can hear it.' But the reason why she was like that – and I recognised this from the very beginning, because I had worked with singer-songwriters before – was because when singer-songwriters *write* a song, they think the song is finished. If you added an instrument, that was all the arrangement needed. If you added a drum, that was over-arranging."

Eli And The Thirteenth Confession did not boast dazzling sales on release. Its peak position on the Billboard Pop Album chart was a measly Number 181. That said, its impact was deeply felt on American radio, where covers of its songs seemed to multiply by the day.

"After we cut the *Eli* album, David brought Stoned Soul Picnic to [producer] Bones Howe, and he cut it with The 5th Dimension," recalls Calello. "So I asked David why he did that. He says, 'Laura doesn't want to tour. And in order for us to get her name out there, we've got to get the songs recorded.' So Bones produced Stoned Soul Picnic, and they copied my record. I had created the bed for it, and they then did it with The 5th Dimension. Then after that, some of the songs she had recorded started to get notoriety. So after we finished the *Eli* record these other covers started to surface."

AND SO WHEN *ELI*'S IMPECCABLE FOLLOW-UP *New York Tendaberry* emerged in 1969, the label's advertising emphasised the song over the singer…

Not many people knew about Laura Nyro a few years ago.
Then she wrote And When I Die and Wedding Bell Blues.
And had a best-selling album.
And wrote Stoned Soul Picnic, Sweet Blindness, Eli's Comin and Save The Country.
And released her second Columbia album, New York Tendaberry.
A lot of people know about Laura Nyro now…

While not similarly trumpeted in ads, the deal Geffen had negotiated with CBS Records that year was historic in its own right. For a reported $4.5 million, the label purchased Tuna Fish Music, to be split in half by its joint owners Nyro and Geffen. With a sharply negotiated recording contract that already allowed her full artistic control, Laura Nyro, now a millionaire, was sitting pretty.

"Her uniqueness as an artist was definitely being confirmed by a fervent fan base," Clive Davis recalls today. "Her special songwriting ability was definitely being confirmed by other artists who were recording her songs – songs that have *become* standards." He pauses. "What was commercially frustrating was – and that's possibly and probably what contributed to her uniqueness – she was impervious to any production ideas in her own recordings."

Consider the testimony of former Young Rascal Felix Cavaliere, who with Arif Mardin would co-produce Nyro's 1970 *Christmas And The Beads Of Sweat*, and maintained a lifelong friendship with her thereafter.

"[The label] was looking for hitmakers, and the reason that people would think that she was difficult is because she really didn't *care* whether there were hits or not," he tells MOJO today. "I would say she was really the purest artist I've ever met in my life. She just wanted her vision put on tape. It was reflected, for example, in the title of the album. You know, we were told immediately that if we used the title *Christmas And The Beads Of Sweat* after the holiday season's over, it was gonna be pulled from the shelves. And she couldn't care less."

There are aspects of Nyro's bio that read like the classic cult artist hard luck story. Despite an initial signing to a label some called a tax dodge, and negligible sales for her own records in her lifetime, Nyro would ultimately win big with the wealth of her publishing catalogue, and the muscle her CBS Records contract offered, including the freedom to withdraw from the limelight following her 1971 collaboration with Labelle, *Gonna Take A Miracle*. She would return to the business with 1976's *Smile*, again a collaboration with producer/arranger Charlie Calello, and several more studio albums up to *Angel In The Dark*, a posthumous collection of her final tracks. And, not incidentally, the once-reticent live performer spent much of her later career on-stage; seven live Nyro LPs are currently available.

There were romantic turns and friendships in her life that were closely guarded, but there's no denying her closeness to David Geffen (which would fade when he founded Asylum Records and Nyro opted to stay at Columbia), her marriage to friend David Bianchini in 1971, which lasted three years, and her brief relationship with Harindra Singh, resulting in their son Gil Bianchini in 1978. In the '80s, she lived together with painter Maria Desiderio, a relationship that lasted 17 years and brought Nyro much happiness until her death in 1997.

Sometimes it's too easy to make an artist into a victim of the record biz, and Laura Nyro never truly fit that, or any, mould. As Felix Cavaliere concludes, "She did what she wanted.

"We would have situations," he says. "Like, for example, when we did Up On The Roof for the *Christmas* album. She did a couple of vocal passes and, you know, Arif and I, we really liked one particular that she did, and she didn't. She liked another version. So, the next day she came in and erased the one we liked, and that was that."

Cavaliere laughs at the memory.

"See, you don't find people like this too often, you know, on the Planet Earth." Ⓜ

Laura Nyro's American Dreamer box set is out now on the Madfish label.

In full artistic control: Nyro directs a small string section, New York, June 22, 1969.

Getty (2), Alamy

Laura Nyro in 1990: "Now that I'm older, I'm so damn busy and responsible."

THE LOST INTERVIEW!

"I Was Kind Of A Wild Girl"

NOVEMBER 1994. Wrapped in a voluminous black shawl, Laura Nyro was meant to be discussing the art of songwriting before her show at north London's suitably gothic 19th century Union Chapel but she was clearly much keener practising on her dummy keyboard: an illustration of Nyro's commitment to the task, of serving her songs and similarly imperious cover versions as best she knew, but not the interview that MOJO was anticipating. When an assistant announced that Ms Nyro had to eat, we had to admit defeat, and our conversation disappeared into the 'one that got away' pile. Knowing that Nyro died of cancer three years later, aged just 49, her words that afternoon, in the fading light, are that much more valuable. Finally, in what would be her very last UK interview, Laura Nyro speaks.

Did you try to write Top 10 hits or was that accidental?
It was about self-expression. Like why a person writes poetry. I never thought about writing a hit, never never. I used to love the challenge to my intelligence of song structure, and that was an area where I was intelligent, with music.

Do you feel apart from that first rush of songwriting now? It was 25 years ago.
I feel a certain immediacy about what I am involved with now. To me, it's like an earth process, and it really is like each recording is like having a little child, you know. I really do see it like that, so I get very involved with it.

Those kids have grown up and left home, and you feel like you see them from time to time?
Yeah, it's like they're all part of the *joie de vivre* of singing, you know, and as an artist, like writing and structure, you know, it's like musical sculpture, and that is exciting to me.

As you get older, you want to be more specific and direct, less poetic and impressionistic?
I think it depends on the song. I think, a song like Broken Rainbow [from her 1993 album *Walk The Dog And Light The Light*] is poetic and specific. Sometimes you go through a phase where you're more specific because there are more things you want to say, and you need to say them in that way, but the next phase you go through could be less specific.

Is it easier or harder to write songs now?
All I know is, right now, now that I'm older, I'm so damn busy and responsible. You just have more responsibilities, so the singing drops from the top of the list. Every once in a while, I realise I am not writing because I'm busy with everything else. And then I really feel like, for me, there is something missing.

Why do you think you only had hit singles when your songs were covered by others?
I'm more in a different kind of poetic realm. Like, for instance, my life might be more of a writer's life, like a poet's life. It's a different temperament, they're not that involved in the mainstream, the commercial world, not as much as certain others, though I have no judgement on that. People come from different places.

Are you plotting more recordings?
I'm currently working on three songs right now. One is kind of impressionistic soul music, another is my new original, and the third is a live recording, because I have a harmony group of six women, three of which are here with me tonight.

Any disappointments?
No, my general feeling was like, it was fun for me. The way I approach it is, that's the art I'm studying, a totally different kind of involvement.

When you look back, what do you see?
Oh, a kind of wild girl. But someone who was trying to learn about the art of songwriting and the art of singing.

Martin Aston

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THE 75 BEST NEW ALBUMS OF 2021

THE BEST REISSUES, FILMS, BOOKS & HAPPENINGS

***PLUS:* "THE BEST THING I'VE HEARD ALL YEAR!"**

Getty (6), Alamy, Courtesy Mass Distraction Media, Nathan Keay, Zackery Michael

75 BLK JKS
Abantu/Before Humans (GLITTERBEAT)

74 GRUFF RHYS
Seeking New Gods (ROUGH TRADE)

73 STEPHEN FRETWELL
Busy Guy (SPEEDY WUNDERGROUND)

72 HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER
Quietly Blowing It (MERGE)

71 EMMA-JEAN THACKRAY
Yellow (MOVEMENTT)

70 BLACK MIDI
Cavalcade (ROUGH TRADE)

69 DINOSAUR JR.
Sweep It Into Space (JAGJAGUWAR)

68 LORETTA LYNN
Still Woman Enough (LEGACY)

67 AC/DC
Power Up (COLUMBIA)

66 LUCY DACUS
Home Video (MATADOR)

65 GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR
G_d's Pee At STATE's END! (CONSTELLATION)

64 TONY ALLEN
There Is No End (DECCA)

63 HOWLIN RAIN
The Dharma Wheel (SILVER CURRENT)

62 PARQUET COURTS
Sympathy For Life (ROUGH TRADE)

61 STEVE GUNN
Other You (MATADOR)

60 CEDRIC BURNSIDE
I Be Trying (SINGLE LOCK)

59 BILLY F GIBBONS
Hardware (CONCORD)

58 RYLEY WALKER
Course In Fable (HUSKY PANTS)

57 REIGNING SOUND
A Little More Time With… (MERGE)

56 LORDE
Solar Power (REPUBLIC)

55 BADBADNOTGOOD
Talk Memory (XL)

54 TONY JOE WHITE
Smoke From The Chimney (EASY EYE SOUND)

53 ANGEL BAT DAWID & THA BROTHAHOOD
Live (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)

52 NATHAN SALSBURG
Psalms (NO QUARTER)

51 DEAN BLUNT
Black Metal 2 (ROUGH TRADE)

THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

50

MATT SWEENEY & BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY
Superwolves (DOMINO)

Family life may have slowed Will Oldham's antic productivity these past few years, but a reconnection with old sparring partner Sweeney led to his best LP for a decade. Sixteen years after *Superwolf*, their belated follow-up pitted Sweeney's ornate guitar lines – like a gothically-inflected Richard Thompson – against Oldham's unusually intimate lyrics about fatherhood. Mdou Moctar guested on Hall Of Death for a rousing hybrid of folk rock and Tuareg blues.
Standout track: Watch What Happens

49

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING
Bright Magic (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)

Whimsical eggheads behind history-buff concept albums about Cold War space exploration and Welsh coalmining, J. Willgoose and his PSB time team moved on to Berlin, its myths and musical past, for this imposing fourth album. Bowie, inevitably, proved a key influence, but there was also room for Depeche Mode industrial drama, Weimar disco – and a magnificently stern cameo from Blixa Bargeld, abiding spirit of the city's Bohemian heritage.
Standout track: The Visitor

48

SQUID
Bright Green Field (WARP)

Boundary-pushing, post-punk and prog-literate, often inclined to a rant; the brave new wave of young British guitar bands continued to impress in 2021, from relative old hands like Black Midi to emergent sensations Yard Act and Wet Leg. Brighton quintet Squid's debut was another significant release, their limber polyrhythms akin to both Can and Talking Heads, but with a dystopian character of their own thanks to hectoring singer-drummer Ollie Judge.
Standout track: Pamphlets

47

TYLER, THE CREATOR
Call Me If You Get Lost (COLUMBIA)

It would've taken a bold clairvoyant, 15 years ago, to forecast that the leader of the prankish, wilfully shocking LA collective Odd Future Wolf Gang would end up making sensitive concept albums influenced by Baudelaire. Tyler's sixth solo set was just that: a sprawling, complex, jazz and reggae-tinged epic that reasserted the rapper's skills, alongside Kendrick Lamar, as one of hip-hop's most adventurous and intellectually provocative voices.
Standout track: Wilshire

46

FAYE WEBSTER
I Know I'm Funny haha (SECRETLY CANADIAN)

Hip-hop photographer, yo-yo grandmaster, baseball obsessive, Atlanta's Faye Webster also established herself as a droll and engaging singer-songwriter, a kind of country-soul Phoebe Bridgers. This pedal-steel and strings-flecked fourth long-player, at once sharp and understated, was her best yet, not least for the languid wisdom it imparted about the pandemic world we're living through: "I don't get the point of leaving my house/'Cos I always come back."
Standout track: Both All The Time

45

JUNGLE
Loving In Stereo (CAIOLA)

A London production duo with an intimate working knowledge of dance music history, Jungle matched emotional resonance with canonical accuracy on this uplifting third set. A fusion of disco, house, Brit-funk and more, *Loving In Stereo* was that rarity: a big mainstream pop record, no celebrity cameos, full of crate-digger bona fides. The closing Can't Stop The Stars was a joy: a swish update of Philly International's sweetest moves.
Standout track: Can't Stop The Stars

44

ARAB STRAP
As Days Get Dark (ROCK ACTION)

The Falkirk duo began their first album in 16 years very much on brand, Aidan Moffat intoning, "I don't give a fuck about the past." This seventh Arab Strap album stayed true to their original M.O. – hardboiled Caledonian reportage from the morning-after squalor – while also acknowledging a new, middle-aged emotional candour; witness Moffat's tender confessions of being a father on the road, Tears On Tour.
Standout track: The Turning Of Our Bones

43

DAMON ALBARN
The Nearer The Fountain, More Pure The Stream Flows (TRANSGRESSIVE)

Never averse to a project, Britpop's inexhaustible alum went from Gorillaz hyperactivity to this more pensive work. First conceived as an orchestral homage to his Icelandic second home, *The Nearer The Fountain, More Pure The Stream Flows* (a John Clare line) evolved in lockdown into a more wistful, writerly work: the song cycle of a globe-trotter confined – as were we all – to barracks.
Standout track: The Cormorant

42

DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS
Private Space (DEAD OCEANS/COLEMINE)

Where once soul revivalism felt a niche concern, 2021 found longtime players hitting the mainstream: Black Pumas at the Grammys and Biden inauguration; Curtis Harding with a breakout hit on a Marvel show. Bloomington's Jones & The Indications, meanwhile, progressed from '60s grit to '70s silk, drummer Aaron Frazer's falsetto more prominent than ever (he also added a strong solo album to his resumé).
Standout track: Ride Or Die

41

NALA SINEPHRO
Space 1.8 (WARP)

If the London jazz scene's output slowed a little in 2021 – inevitable, perhaps, given the challenges that prevented collective improv sessions in the same room – innovative new thinkers now came to the fore. None were more creative than Nala Sinephro, a Caribbean-Belgian harpist-cum-electronic composer who reconfigured live sessions into dreamy processed ambience. Like Jon Hassell and Brian Eno going to work on an Alice Coltrane jam, very loosely.
Standout track: Space 4

Rickie Lee Jones, troubadour and chronicler, in 1981 circa *Pirates*: "Fame is a hard act to follow."

"I Wanted To Set The Record Straight"

LAST CHANCE TEXACO: CHRONICLES OF AN AMERICAN TROUBADOUR

Rickie Lee Jones

(BLACK CAT/GROVE PRESS)

What did the chanteuse of the LA demi-monde learn from her scintillating memoir? "Fame is a hard act to follow," she tells SYLVIE SIMMONS.

"SOME PEOPLE," wrote Rickie Lee Jones, "are born to live lives on an exaggerated scale." Jones's great albums – notably her self-titled 1979 debut and 1981 follow-up, *Pirates* – are picaresques bursting with larger-than-life characters, so perhaps it's not surprising that her beautifully written memoir struck readers similarly. It's one of those mythically American stories of hard lives lived in perpetual motion; people running from someone or something over and over to chase some part of the American Dream; with music, dope, ghosts and famous ex-boyfriends clamouring for roles. The antithesis of the rote rock tale, it took many years of wrangling and struggles with her publisher over her approach. "Surely, if they're signing me," she asks MOJO, "they know I do things differently?"

Congratulations! Last Chance Texaco is MOJO's Music Book of the Year.

Ah, that's good.

What motivated you to write it? To set the record straight? To make some money?

I wanted to set the record straight about my own life, which has been told by people who weren't there and rewritten and reimagined. I wanted to tell it in my voice, and to tell my family's stories. I don't know why it's so important to me that people know *their* lives, but the story is our story as a family and *then* my story as a woman of my time. Also it *could* have been for money, but I didn't get that much of an advance (*laughs*). And it took a really long time to make it.

There's some harrowing stories, but you tell them without bitterness.

The very first draft had so much bitterness I was, "I don't want to publish that!", and I would write it again and the bitterness would still be in there. I thought, "How am I going to get rid of this?" It's in the very grease of the vowels. So as a writer I made a decision that the book has to lift people up. I don't think there's any hiding in it, but if I scribble a line through somebody's name and say, "What a dick, what a bitch," that's not to going to help anybody. And ultimately I'm delivering a message to myself about who I am, so it's also revelatory. That's what you hope with any piece of art: that when you're done with it, you learn something too. When it was over, there was a fantastic completion and dignity.

> **"The very first draft had so much bitterness, I was, 'I don't want to publish that!'"**

What was the biggest thing you learned about yourself?

That there was no shame in any direction I'd taken in life, they were all the right way. That I'd grown up to be a person of dignity, because I brought the family in and gave them dignity. The most difficult, bitter lesson to learn? That fame is a hard act to follow. If you've been at the very top, as I was, then there's nowhere to go but down – and as I go down, "Oh wow, you're so condescending now, and you were so nice before…"

What did you learn about your significant others, like Tom Waits, Lowell George, Dr. John?

To be honest, when I wrote about some of them I realised they weren't really nice people. I think I had kept them safe. I don't know why we date not-nice people and try to make them into beautiful shining stars and go, "That bad thing they did was just an anomaly, they're really good," when really they're kind of dicks and you pretend or make up the good things they do. I mean you can say everybody's pretty neutral, nobody's bad, nobody's good, but I think actually I have been entwined with some nefarious characters who were self-serving, and I didn't see it until I wrote it. But I was careful not to vilify anybody. I wanted to show you what they did and let you make your own determination. Nobody's a villain, including me.

How was it reading the audiobook?

That was a challenge! At first I wanted to read like Frances McDormand (*laughs*). It took me a while to have faith in my voice.

Will you write a sequel?

There are many other stories that I think are good, so yes, I *am* writing another thing of random stories that, hopefully, when it's done will, as records do, take the shape of a greater story.

THE SHORTLIST

1 **LAST CHANCE TEXACO**
Rickie Lee Jones (BLACK CAT/GROVE PRESS)

2 **LOOKING TO GET LOST**
Peter Guralnick (LITTLE, BROWN)

3 **NINA SIMONE'S GUM**
Warren Ellis (FABER & FABER)

4 **UNREQUITED INFATUATIONS**
Stevie Van Zandt (WHITE RABBIT)

5 **TENEMENT KID**
Bobby Gillespie (WHITE RABBIT)

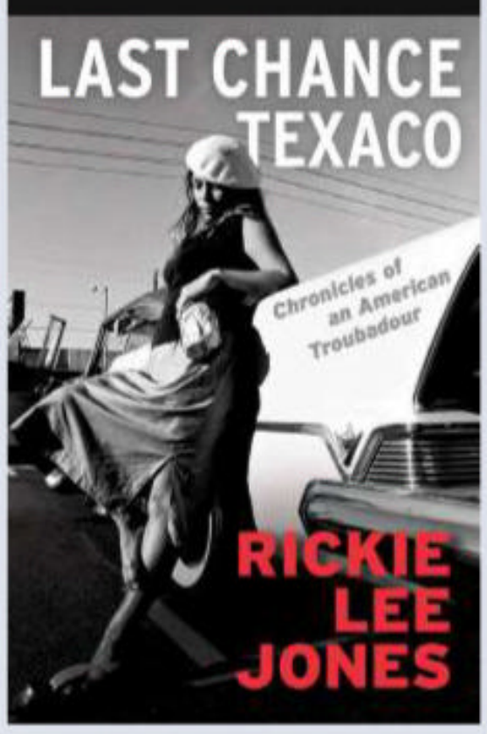
6 **EXCAVATE!: THE WONDERFUL AND FRIGHTENING WORLD OF THE FALL**
Tessa Norton & Bob Stanley (FABER & FABER)

7 **BUNNYMAN: A MEMOIR**
Will Sergeant (CONSTABLE)

8 **FROM MANCHESTER WITH LOVE: THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TONY WILSON**
Paul Morley (FABER & FABER)

9 **YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU ARE ALONE: THE BIOGRAPHY OF NICO**
Jennifer Otter Bickerdike (FABER & FABER)

10 **BEESWING: FAIRPORT, FOLK ROCK AND FINDING MY VOICE 1967-75**
Richard Thompson (FABER & FABER)



Tom Sheehan, Brett Rubin

18+

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MUSIC FILM OF THE YEAR

On another planet: Gladys Knight And The Pips get on board the Friendship Train; (left, from top) Nina Simone; The 5th Dimension; the Harlem Festival audience; (inset right) director Questlove; (far right, from top) Mavis Staples (left) and Mahalia Jackson; Hugh Masekela; the eye-catching stage as David Ruffin gyrates.

"I Had Way Too Much Information!"

SUMMER OF SOUL distilled cultural history and musical revelation in a mindblowing brew. First-time director QUESTLOVE talks to DAVID HUTCHEON.

YOU WEREN'T alone if you had never heard of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, or seen the glorious sets by its headliners, including Stevie Wonder, The Staple Singers, B.B. King and Sly & The Family Stone. Although most of it had been filmed, and the rights-holders spent years trying to interest national TV companies, the footage sat on a shelf, forgotten in the shadow of the Woodstock behemoth. Little bits escaped – MOJO remembers finding the whole Sly & The Family Stone set on YouTube – but, for the world at large, this six-week celebration (June 29-August 24) of arguably the most fertile period in African-American music might never have happened. Enter Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson, best known as the drummer with The Roots, the Philadelphian hip-hop veterans (and house band on NBC's The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon), and a DJ, author and record collector of note, but not, until now, a garlanded film-maker. The result combined extraordinary performances and vibrant politics, as a spine-tingling Nina Simone urged revolution from the stage and vox-popped gig-goers questioned the point, and the cost, of the Apollo 11 moon landing – the big news elsewhere in the world. "Black man want to go back to Africa," says one spliff-toting wag. "White man's going to the moon. I'm a stay in Harlem with the Puerto Ricans, have me some fun!"

Summer Of Soul is MOJO's Film of the Year…

(*Yelling*) JESUS CHRIST! MOJO is one of my favourite periodicals, so the fact all these accolades are raining down on me… I do not take it for granted, man. I appreciate this. Thank you, thank you so much.

How did the film land at your door, because you're not known as a film-maker?

It's funny you say that, I tried to tell my producers the same thing, but they didn't take no for an answer. They knew I had it within me to tell the story. Then on March 15, 2020, when America came to a halt, I thought, "Right, that's it, no more movie, I'm off the hook." But they doubled down: "Nope, we have all the time in the world, let's roll up our sleeves and figure this out." Then a weird thing happened: as we were editing, we realised that we are living in the same circumstances that were happening in 1967, '68 and '69, that caused the concert. So it became a different film. What I intended the film to be pre-pandemic was slower, slightly more nuanced than the urgent, packed-with-information version you've seen.

With all that spellbinding footage, it must have been easy to put it together.

I had way too much information! You guys are seeing less than 20 per cent of what was under the hood. My first draft was three hours and 25 minutes. There's a whole comedy component that we didn't even touch, including the only documented full performance of Pigmeat Markham in Harlem. There were massive hits. There was much more gospel. The psychedelic stuff: The Chambers Brothers did a crazy, 14-minute version of Time. There are moments where it mirrored Woodstock, but we wanted to keep those comparisons to a minimum. People ask me all the time, "What's going to happen to the rest of the footage?"

What's going to happen to the rest of the footage?

I'm certain that, eventually, it's going to make the rounds, there's so much more. I didn't want to overwhelm people.

Some people objected to the subtitle (…Or, When The Revolution Could Not Be Televised). What was that about?

People had tried to negotiate to get the footage before, and deals either fell short or fell apart. Anyone who tried to bring the film out earlier, more power to them, but some people missed out on a payday. When I came on board, in 2017, that footage was still in the basement. No production company wanted to take it on. They thought licensing would be a nightmare.

The vox pops, particularly critical statements about the moon landing, which coincided with Stevie Wonder's show, are eye-opening.

Daniel Dorsa, Courtesy of Mass Distraction Media/Searchlight Pictures (7)

"When I came on board in 2017, the footage was still in the basement. No production company wanted to take it on."
QUESTLOVE

There's a moment when Gene Key, Stevie Wonder's musical director, says to him, "You're singing here in Harlem; meanwhile, there's a man on the moon," and the audience starts to boo. In the mid-'70s, my teachers taught me that [the moon landing] was to be celebrated. Our researchers found footage from CBS News – they went to the Harlem Cultural Festival to interview people to see how they felt – and it was filed under "Black People's Feelings On The Moon Landing". Once we'd uncovered that, we all agreed it had to be shared because I personally did not know that.

Any plans to make another film?

My next project is on Sly & The Family Stone. Speaking of MOJO, one of the most gripping articles I ever read was about [bassist] Larry Graham's last night in the group. I knew that these two weeks in 1969 were the most important of Sly's life, playing Harlem in preparation for Woodstock, which would make him a household name. I obsessed about that, then I got a call from [rapper/writer] Common, and his production company owns the rights to the group's life story. "You want to direct it?" The one thing we do have in the can is about seven hours of Sly talking. He's clear, he's lucid, he's very sharp and on point. He was beyond a game changer, he was a paradigm shifter, and there's a lot to unpack there. I can't wait to dig into it.

Any Roots news?

We are past the halfway part of the 17th Roots album. It's on its way.

Did you buy much music in lockdown? You reputedly have a collection of 70,000 records…

Oh, it got a little out of hand, I'm kissing 200,000 now. I was running out of space, so I bought a farm. A lot of colleges are shutting down, and when colleges shut down, jazz stations shut down. I'll get a phone call from people saying: "We have more than 40,000 records in our library and they'll go to trash, and I don't want to see that. Do you want these things?" A lot of widows contact me, 80-year-olds who were married to men who owned warehouses with 60,000 jukebox 45s…

Is there one record you desperately want?

There was. My Tonight Show producers found the one I've been looking for all my life. There's a version of Sly & The Family Stone's Stand! that does not have the funk bit at the end. Sly took a test pressing to the Whisky A Go-Go in Hollywood in 1969, but the kids weren't impressed. So he adds that 30-second funk ending, as an afterthought. He tells Epic to destroy all the original 45s, but they accidentally pressed both. For my birthday, Jimmy Fallon got me one of the original versions. And now I have that I literally want nothing in the world. I'm now collecting horrible covers of Michael Jackson's Rock With You and cheesy versions of Stevie Wonder's I Wish.

What's the best thing you've heard all year?

I can not scream loud enough about Sault. I'll relax some days by driving for three-four hours listening to their records. Mariah Carey asked me: "Have you heard this group called Sault?" Johnny Marr just randomly hit me up, like two years after we last spoke, telling me: "This is a band I think you should get into, man." I'm like: "I'm already there." But for Johnny frickin' Marr to be a Sault fan… that's the most mind-blowing shit ever. I love them to death.

THE SHORTLIST

1 SUMMER OF SOUL (dir: Questlove)
The documentary as act of reclamation. The concert film as relentless carnival of spiritual intensity. The Mavis Staples and Mahalia Jackson duet was devastating.

2 GET BACK (dir: Peter Jackson)
After six hours, you'll feel like you were *in* The Beatles (with all this going on, no wonder George walked). Then the 'full rooftop' blows you away.

3 THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (dir: Todd Haynes)
Cale, Tucker, eyewitnesses and candid footage contributed to aptly hypnotic yet seriously rigorous dive into history's most brilliantly challenging pop group.

4 ZAPPA (dir: Alex Winter)
Labour of love doc with brilliant footage and revealing talking heads (especially the wonderful Ruth Underwood) even Frank Zappa sceptics should see. Most non-non-non-bogus.

5 MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM (dir: George C Wolfe)
Big, bold musical bio-drama, richly bedded in the blues and jazz of the '20s. Viola Davis was dynamite as Rainey. Chadwick Boseman, RIP, a riveting scene-stealer as her cornet foil.

6 DELIA DERBYSHIRE: THE MYTHS AND THE LEGENDARY TAPES (dir: Caroline Catz)
Doc and biopic blend fleshed out the distaff electronic music pioneer. Cosi Fanni Tutti helped out, mysteriously. Also enjoy: the wider-ranging Sisters With Transistors.

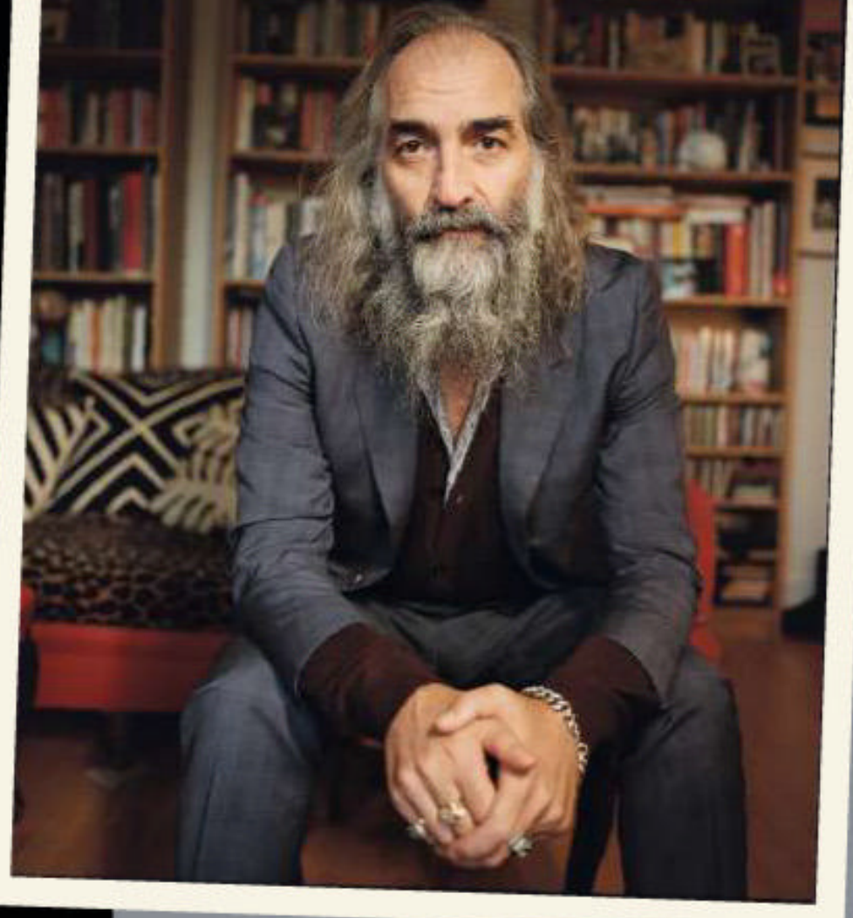
7 THE SPARKS BROTHERS (dir: Edgar Wright)
Superfan Wright dived into the heart of Mael bros' strange symbiosis. Also, in a year of Marmite Sparks flicks, check out Annette, which they wrote and scored.

8 RESPECT (dir: Liesl Tommy)
Aretha done proud with perfect musical set-pieces, atomic singing by Jennifer Hudson and able support from Forest Whitaker as scary preacher dad.

9 WITHOUT GETTING KILLED OR CAUGHT (dir: Tamara Savano/Paul Whitfield)
Doc exploring the love triangle between Guy Clark, wife Susanna and Townes Van Zandt – Heartworn Highways meets Jules Et Jim. Susanna's audio diaries starred.

10 McCARTNEY 3,2,1 (dir: Zachary Heinzerling)
Sir P and Rick Rubin crouched over a mixing desk in the gloom, playing Macca music and picking over its peculiarities in this surprisingly fab Hulu/Disney+ series.

WORKHORSE OF THE YEAR



"He seemed so relaxed this time": Ellis backs Nick Cave, Royal Albert Hall, October 6, 2021; (above) Warren in his warren; (insets) 2021's LP, sanctuary and book.

"It's Been One Of My Favourite Tours Ever"

Pioneering the post-lockdown return of live music – and much else besides – was Bad Seed WARREN ELLIS. ANDREW MALE caught up with him, just about.

IT'S BEEN an astonishing year for Warren Ellis. First, there was his involvement with Nick Cave on MOJO's Number 5 Album Of The Year, the surreal, cinematic and emotionally staggering *Carnage*, and the intimate, life-affirming post-lockdown tour that came in its wake. He also released what must surely be one of the most strange, illuminating and wonderful 'music' books ever, in the shape of Nina Simone's Gum. He collaborated with Marianne Faithfull on her poetry passion project, *She Walks In Beauty*, and, perhaps more unexpectedly, opened up Ellis Park, a wildlife sanctuary in Sumatra for "special needs" animals that can no longer be returned to the wild. "What a purple patch for a nearly 60-year-old," he laughs as MOJO lists all the reasons for calling. "But you know, work is the only thing that makes sense to me. When things are falling apart I have to keep creating."

What's it been like communing with live audiences again?

Incredibly moving. Nick and I were presenting this very bold show, playing *Carnage* and *Ghosteen*, but they were some of the most communal, emotional shows I've ever been involved in. It's really been one of my favourite tours ever.

Because of Covid regulations it was quite a stripped-down tour, with you and Nick Cave travelling everywhere together in a little van. How was that?

Before the tour I didn't think I could love Nick any more, but it's just been so fantastic. I've played with Nick for 25 years but he just seemed so relaxed this time. Maybe it's also something to do with what we've been going through. Just talking to local people every night about how they'd got through lockdown and Covid. It was amazing. We had to test every day and if someone got Covid we'd have had to to shut everything down which would have meant financial ruin. It was a miracle nobody caught it.

"Just talking to local people every night about how they'd got through lockdown, it was amazing."

These were very intimate songs, about loss and mourning, and you were performing to audiences who'd also experienced similar loss due to Covid. Is that something you discussed?

I think the material speaks for itself. I'd like to think everybody knows the circumstances those records come out of. So we clearly, we don't talk about that because we just don't. It's part of the human condition. The thing that was quite different about these shows was that you were basically seeing how Nick and I are in the studio, making something in real time. You can see our relationship up on stage. There was something incredibly human about that.

The response to your book, Nina Simone's Gum has been quite incredible.

This was a total surprise. It's been really overwhelming. I didn't really know how it was gonna land. I was waiting for people to pass judgement and I realise that it's also a book about the need for affirmation from other people. I write about [the late Triffids singer] Dave McComb in there and I didn't realise how much of a mentor he was. Everybody in there has been so important in drawing out my potential, helping me to realise my better self.

How did Ellis Park come about?

So much trauma happened as a result of Covid but I couldn't help but notice the sense of community as well. That definitely had a knock-on effect with me. There was a need for hope amidst all the rage, the need to put something back. It's up and running now and we have little broken creatures being brought to the sanctuary every day. I can't imagine life without it. I honestly don't know what I did before.

What's planned for 2022?

Well, hopefully we'll be back out with the Bad Seeds doing festivals. Nick and I have done the music for this snow leopard documentary that's absolutely beautiful plus the music for Andrew Dominik's new film, Blonde. There's also a new record by The Dirty Three, and I also want to go over to Ellis Park next year and take a giant sculpture of Nina Simone's gum out there, as something for the monkeys to play on. Maybe make a documentary about that. Have you read that book The Secret Life Of Salvador Dali when he arrives off the boat in New York with a giant baguette? I'm imagining something like that.

Getty, Rosie Matheson, Udoma Janssen, Heather Corcoran

THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

40

CHRISSIE HYNDE

Standing In The Doorway (BMG)

Deluxe 2021 reissues of the first two Pretenders albums caught the eye, but Chrissie Hynde's latter-day creative streak was not much less impressive: a strong 2020 Pretenders set followed by this connoisseur's selection of Dylan covers, inspired by the profundities of Murder Most Foul. Recorded at Hynde's home for maximum intimacy, expertly mixed for optimum scale, the album found one of the great singers of the post-punk era still at the peak of her powers.
Standout track: Blind Willie McTell

39

JANE WEAVER

Flock (FIRE)

Jane Weaver's steady progress from kosmische/folk esoterica to a kind of uncanny synthpop was confirmed by the Technicolor epiphanies of her 11th solo album. Old fascinations remained – the percolating ambience of Modern Reputation was a match for peak Stereolab – but they flowed gracefully into Goldfrapp-style disco (Solarised; Sunset Dreams) and even, on The Revolution Of Super Visions, a take on Prince funk that was politically astute even as it sounded lubricious.
Standout track: Modern Reputation

38

SAINT ETIENNE

I've Been Trying To Tell You (HEAVENLY)

Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs's curated comps for the Ace label have long betrayed a keen ear for period detail, but while those sets chiefly focused on the '60s and '70s, their latest reunion with Sarah Cracknell conceptually recaptured the late '90s; a neglected cultural era between Labour's 1997 victory and 9/11. The results were way too smart to be orthodox nostalgia: a dream-like series of near-ambient epiphanies that relocated hauntology in a new era.
Standout track: Little K

37

STURGILL SIMPSON

Cuttin' Grass Vol. 2: The Cowboy Arms Sessions (HIGH TOP MOUNTAIN/THIRTY TIGERS)

After the precision-tooled electroboogie of 2019's *Sound & Fury*, Simpson has latterly dug deep into his bluegrass roots, culminating in 2021's *Ballad Of Dood & Juanita*. This set from late 2020, however, was even stronger: highlights from his maverick career, given new life by top bluegrass band The Hillbilly Avengers. With Simpson on indefinite hiatus thanks to haemorrhaged vocal cords, this makes a great primer for a stalled career.
Standout track: Welcome To Earth (Pollywog)

36

WOLF ALICE

Blue Weekend (DIRTY HIT/RCA)

Those who claim that Britain no longer produces big rock bands, built for festival headline slots, would be advised to check out the rampantly ambitious, ethically sophisticated Wolf Alice. On their third album, their horizons expanded further, with a default aesthetic of old 4AD atmospherics amped up for arenas, and a supplementary keenness to have a go at everything from country-pop harmonising (Safe From Heartbreak) to punky ramalam (Play The Greatest Hits).
Standout track: Feeling Myself

35

THE STRANGLERS

Dark Matters (COURSEGOOD/ABSOLUTE)

When The Stranglers began recording their 18th album, it was the first since drummer Jet Black had retired in 2015; by the time it was completed, it was also the last to feature keyboardist Dave Greenfield, who passed in 2020. A bittersweet air thus hung over *Dark Matters*, notably on the poignant And If You Should See Dave – but it couldn't overshadow their best album in decades; an artistic evolution, never a nostalgic self-parody.
Standout track: White Stallion

34

GREENTEA PENG

Man Made (AMF)

Arlo Parks might have brought trip-hop back into the mainstream in 2021, but it was Bermondsey's free-spirited Greentea Peng who really tapped into the cosmic possibilities of the genre on her debut LP. Peng's concerns were often specialised – "Release all of my brothers on a weed charge"; "Eat some fuckin' shrooms" – but her reggae and funk-inflected music was a delight; a south London Erykah Badu, breathing life into hippy rhetoric.
Standout track: Be Careful

33

ENDLESS BOOGIE

Admonitions (NO QUARTER)

From the opening 22-minute throbber, The Offender, to the amp burn meditations that closed the album nearly an hour and a half later, the fifth studio set by New York's crudest and most mystical rock institution was a full-gas primer on their genius. Counterfeiter was their finest invocation of trucker Neu!, Disposable Thumbs a perfect entry point to the Boogie hinterland. Once again, they did what it said on the tin.
Standout track: Disposable Thumbs

32

PAUL McCARTNEY

McCartney III (CAPITOL)

Released too late to figure in our 2020 chart, Paul McCartney's 18th solo album found him re-embracing the homebaked, DIY vibes of *I* and *II* to reassert the maverick experimental spirit that can be obscured by all those extraordinary tunes. Often eccentric, at times disconcertingly emotional, it was among the best albums defined by lockdown. *McCartney III Imagined* followed in April, with songs reworked by Beck, St. Vincent, Damon Albarn and more.
Standout track: Deep Deep Feeling

31

KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD

LW (KGLW)

Just the two LPs in 2021 from the ever-mutating, ever-productive Aussie collective. June's *Butterfly 3000* was synthier, poppier (by their standards), but this microtonally exotic follow-up to November 2020's *K.G.* was the keeper; heavy on the Turkish psych influences, culminating in crazy sludge-rock riffing, and generally reverberant with the mind-expanding Gizzard energy that has made all their 463 albums in the last decade so much fun.
Standout track: O.N.E

JAZZ

Compiled by ANDY COWAN

1 **SONS OF KEMET**
Black To The Future (IMPULSE!)

2 **FERGUS McCREADIE**
Cairn (EDITION)

3 **ANGEL BAT DAWID & THE BROTHAHOOD**
Live (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)

4 **BINKER GOLDING, JOHN EDWARDS, STEVE NOBLE**
Moon Day (BYRD OUT)

5 **IRREVERSIBLE ENTANGLEMENTS**
Open The Gates (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)

6 **PORTICO QUARTET**
Terrain (GONDWANA)

7 **MARIDALEN**
Maridalen (JAZZLAND)

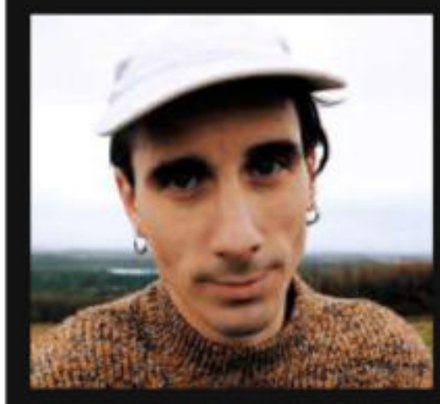
8 **MARK FELDMAN**
Sounding Point (INTAKT)

9 **EMMA-JEAN THACKRAY**
Yellow (MOVEMENTT)

10 **FLUKTEN**
Velkommen Håp (ODIN)

UNDERGROUND

Compiled by ANDREW MALE



1 **DIALECT**
Under~Between (RVNG INTL)

2 **SATOMIMAGAE**
Hanazono (RVNG INTL)

3 **CLAIRE ROUSAY**
A Softer Focus (AMERICAN DREAMS)

4 **SARAH DAVACHI**
Antiphonals (LATE MUSIC)

5 **MIROSHI MINAMI/ EIKO ISHIBASHI**
Gasping Sighing Sobbing (BANDCAMP)

6 **UNITED BIBLE STUDIES**
Divining Movements/West Kennet Ascension (BANDCAMP/PARIAH CHILD)

7 **FUJIIIIITA**
Komori (DOCUMENTING SOUND)

8 **ORA CLEMENTI**
Silva Silvarum (BLACK TRUFFLE)

9 **CHRIS CORSANO/ BILL ORCUTT**
Made Out Of Sound (PALILALIA)

10 **LUKE SANGER**
Languid Gongue (BALMAT)

MOJO PRESENTS

Exploring "climate grief" with fearless writing and sensuous music, THE WEATHER STATION's *Ignorance* was one of MOJO's revelations of 2021. Now Tamara Lindeman has a whole new album ready to fly. "I didn't know if anyone was ever going to hear it," she tells DORIAN LYNSKEY. "I just wanted it to exist."

Photography by **DANIEL DORSA**

RECORDING HER UPCOMING SIXTH ALBUM AS THE WEATHER STATION WAS, says Tamara Lindeman, "the craziest three days of my life".

It was early March 2020. Lindeman had written 10 songs that didn't suit the expansive mood of her as-yet-unreleased fifth album, this year's lauded, revelatory *Ignorance*, but were too good to waste, so she convened half-a-dozen musicians at a studio near her home in Toronto's West End to record not so much a follow-up as a companion or coda. Piano-based and acoustic where *Ignorance*'s production had echoed mid-'80s epics by Talk Talk and The Blue Nile, *How Is It That I Should Look At The Stars* will emerge early in 2022. "I didn't even tell anyone I was making this record," she says. "I didn't know if anyone was ever going to hear it. It was almost like a secret. I just wanted it to exist."

She'd heard of the coronavirus, of course, but thought it would be a "blip" like Toronto's 2003 SARS outbreak, even as the news got more unsettling. "We were in our little dream-world," she remembers. "We had no idea. But it did seep in. When I was recording [the album's second track] Endless Time, I had this weird feeling in my stomach: What is happening?" Five days later, the governor of Ontario declared a state of emergency. "It was really heavy but it put a beautiful colour on that record for me. It felt like the last moment of being together."

Even coughing and sniffling at the tail end of a nasty cold, Lindeman is fabulously expressive, with an ambivalent smile playing on her lips more often than not. The sadder the observation she is making, the more likely she is to cap it with a laugh.

Lindeman calls the new album the moon to *Ignorance*'s sun: hushed and nocturnal relative to its predecessor's agile rhythms and broad pop canvas. Both albums, however, emerged from the same period of emotional ➢

Daniel Dorsa

THE BEST OF 2021

Climate of change: The Weather Station's Tamara Lindeman goes down to the wire, Toronto, 2020.

Time of the seasons: (from left) summery Lindeman, 2017; autumnal Tamara Hope acting in September Dawn, 2007; Lindeman wises up during *Ignorance* campaign, 2021; (inset) *Ignorance* sleeve.

"THE SONG IS ALWAYS SHAKING ME AND SAYING, HEY, YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS BUT YOU HAVE TO."

Tamara Lindeman

upheaval. In the autumn of 2018, burned out from touring the last Weather Station album, she read a New Yorker article by the environmentalist Bill McKibben called How Extreme Weather Is Shrinking The Planet and something inside her cracked open. Like most people, she had held back from confronting the reality of the climate crisis but now she plunged headlong into research and reflection, attending demonstrations and turning her Twitter account into a soapbox.

"It made me a little bit crazy for six to eight months," she admits, "because it is a mind-crushing understanding when you're reading about permafrost melting and tipping points. It's fucked. Climate protests were the only place where I felt I wasn't insane."

Now, she says, there's much more understanding of what psychologists call "climate grief" but back then it was this "unseen thing" that her friends didn't talk about. The songs she wrote during that period were her way of making those feelings public, using a different musical strategy to serve each lyric.

"I think people have a messed-up relationship with climate change," she says. "The first emotion they experience is guilt. I felt that nobody was seeing their own loss and sadness. That's one of the foundational emotions of my generation and the generations younger. I don't think anyone's reckoned with what happens to people when you tell them in grade school that the world is going to end and that it's their fault."

ON STARS, FROM THE NEW ALBUM, LINDEMAN sings: "When I was a child my mother would send me outside on a moonless night to see the light." It echoes a line from a 2017 song, Complicit: "I was raised to hear the curlews, I was raised to notice light."

Her childhood really was like that, she says. In the back-to-the-land spirit of the 1970s, her parents (an airline pilot and a painter) had left Toronto for Duffield County in rural Ontario, where they raised two daughters to appreciate nature. Lindeman remembers once being taken out of school to watch a brood of snapping turtles hatch in the driveway. The first time she saw Greta Thunberg speak in 2018, she says, "I saw in her my child self."

Noticing is one of Lindeman's great skills as a songwriter. She can extrapolate a profound meditation on the world from a vividly observed moment or image. On Parking Lot, for example, the memory of watching birds fly over venues on tour leads to an outpouring of climate grief. "My forte as a writer is the small event," she says.

At school, she played piano, sang in choirs and half-wrote songs that she was too impatient to finish, but turned to acting instead of music. What changed? "High school." Hideously bullied, she discovered that a schoolmate was allowed time off because she had a job on a TV show. "I thought if I get an agent I won't have to go to school. So I decided to be an actor. I didn't think about music again for years."

Under the name Tamara Hope, Lindeman secured a few TV gigs and made her movie debut in the 2000 thriller The Deep End, alongside Tilda Swinton. "Coming into contact with someone like that when I was 15 gave me a different viewpoint of what you could be as a woman in the world. I was like, Oh, I didn't know this was possible."

Lindeman decided to resume music when she was at college but "didn't have the guts" to fully quit acting for another decade. Her 40 credits include the president's daughter in Earthquake: The Fall Of Los Angeles, "Society Girl" in Guillermo Del Toro's Crimson Peak, and the lead role in a high school fantasy series called Guinevere Jones.

"There's a handful of films that I'm not unproud of but as an actor you're just one little piece," she says. "You're not a creative partner. Part of why I've become so single-minded and intense as a musician is a response to how obedient I was as an actor. As an insecure teenager, that wasn't good for me because I disappeared into whatever people wanted me to be. I struggle to feel ownership over that time in my life because I literally wasn't myself." She laughs. "My whole *job* was to not be myself. There's a person with your name and your face in the world that you don't relate to."

When Lindeman started releasing music, she switched back to her original surname but shrouded it in the Weather Station alias. That was partly because she had been spooked by creepy fanmail from older men and partly because she wanted to avoid any impression of dabbling. "I didn't want anyone to think I was a child actor from the Disney Channel launching my little side project," she says. "Music to me was an entirely separate thing. I had to divorce myself to be myself."

Alexandrea Scotland, Eyevine, Colin Medley, Jeff Bierk, Jackie Lee Young

"Things bubble up" Lindeman at the piano; (right) performing at the Pitchfork Music Festival earlier this year.

Unlike acting, music gave her total agency. Her idiosyncratic debut album, 2009's *The Line*, emerged from four pressureless years learning how to make records. She had bold ambitions for the follow-up, involving percussionists and loop pedals, but didn't know how to execute them and was considering giving up music altogether until the singer-songwriter Daniel Romano convinced her that it was OK to keep making intimate folk, hence 2011's Romano-produced *All Of It Was Mine*. "I didn't know how to do anything else that felt honest," she says.

After that, her crisis of confidence returned with a vengeance. This time her friend in need was the Toronto musician Afie Jurvanen, AKA Bahamas, who invited her to tour Europe with him as a back-up singer. While in France, they were offered an off-season discount on a studio housed in a 19th century mansion, where she and Jurvanen recorded *Loyalty* in 2015.

"That was beautiful chance," she says. "I'd completely given up on myself. But because I had to make a record, I did."

LINDEMAN'S LIFE WAS STILL unsettled by anxiety and her parents' divorce ("My dad was raising a child in Nairobi," she sang in 2017's breakthrough single, Thirty. "She was three now, he told me") but she embraced a more muscular, extrovert sound on her self-titled fourth album.

"I pushed through that through sheer force of will: This is what I want to do so I *have* to figure this out. It was the first one where I had a vision."

And it was also the first time she found a substantial audience. One reviewer praised her "inexplicable, capital-S Star Power".

Lindeman only appreciated how far she'd come when she agreed to teach a songwriting workshop at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Alberta two years ago, a job she took so seriously that she ended up writing a 30-page handout which she is currently trying to expand into a book about lyric-writing.

"When I look back at my struggles, a lot of it is because I had no understanding of what I was trying to do," she says. "Editing is the danger zone. You can ruin everything. Most of my songs I've destroyed in trying to finish them. I've always thought of songwriting as this sad process of destroying the original spark." Craft, she says, means learning how to "safely shepherd this little spark out the door".

Lindeman says she is pleasantly "shocked" by *Ignorance*'s warm reception but she has also noticed that its themes haven't resurfaced in her most recent songs. While she's no less committed to climate activism, she is less inclined to write about it.

"Things bubble up that I didn't know, and that's 90 per cent of why I find songwriting so painful," she says. "The song is always shaking me and saying, Hey, you don't want to see this but you have to. So the moment I start talking about something, my brain says, Cool, it's out."

Whatever she does next, she finally understands what she's doing. Tamara Lindeman has seen the light. Ⓜ

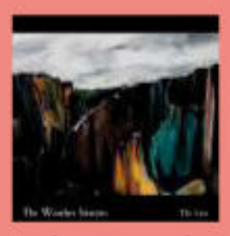
Ignorance (Deluxe) is out now on Fat Possum. How Is It That I Should Look At The Stars is due in spring 2022. *To find where Ignorance places in MOJO's Best Albums Of 2021, turn to p58.*

ALL-WEATHER GEAR

The signposts to *Ignorance*, read by **Dorian Lynskey**.

THE LINE

(Self-Released, 2009)



An apprentice work pieced together over four years in between acting jobs. Lindeman was immersed in the buzzing Toronto indie scene, but this unpredictable laptop bluegrass evinces a doughty independence. "Even though it's a very flawed record I was very proud of it because it was mine," she says.

ALL OF IT WAS MINE

(You've Changed, 2011)

The sleeve design makes Lindeman look like some lost contemporary of Karen Dalton and Emmylou Harris, and she sounds rather like one, too. These 28 minutes of rueful finger-picked folk, seeded with rustic imagery of milkweed and lilacs, are hold-your-breath delicate, but the songwriting is too sharp-eyed to sound precious.

LOYALTY

(Paradise Of Bachelors, 2015)

Soft and spare, this two-hander with Afie Jurvanen reflects its wintry origins but not its last-minute conception, as pastoral language gives way to story-telling with a fine-nibbed precision redolent of Joni Mitchell. "It seemed to me luxury would be to be not so ashamed," she sings on Shy Women.

THE WEATHER STATION

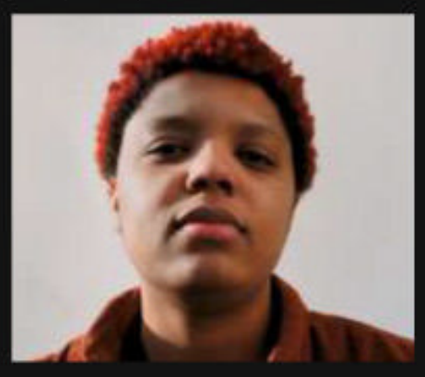
(Paradise Of Bachelors, 2017)

Lindeman goes electric. Country-rock stunner Thirty is the pick of these anthems for introverts, with her propulsive, "super-wordy" new songwriting style augmented by amps and strings. Her examinations of relationships and societies under pressure clear the path for *Ignorance*. "I was trying to overwhelm," she says. "The train is going."

THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

ELECTRONICA

Compiled by STEPHEN WORTHY



1 LORAINE JAMES
Reflection
(HYPERDUB)

2 SPACE AFRIKA
Honest Labour
(DAIS)

3 HANNAH PEEL
Fir Wave
(MY OWN PLEASURE)

4 BICEP
Isles
(NINJA TUNE)

5 LEON VYNEHALL
Rare, Forever
(NINJA TUNE)

6 SARAH DAVACHI
Antiphonals
(LATE MUSIC)

7 DJ SEINFELD
Mirrors
(NINJA TUNE)

8 JOY ORBISON
Still Slipping Vol 1
(XL)

9 KORELESS
Agor (YOUNG)

10 HERBERT
Musca
(ACCIDENTAL)

FOLK

Compiled by COLIN IRWIN

1 PEGGY SEEGER
First Farewell (RED GRAPE)

2 LUNATRAKTORS
The Missing Star (BROKEN FOLK)

3 RHIANNON GIDDENS & FRANCESCO TURRISI
They're Calling Me Home
(NONESUCH)

4 SPIERS & BODEN
Fallow Ground (HUDSON)

5 JOHN FRANCIS FLYNN
I Would Not Live Always
(RIVER LEA)

6 KARINE POLWART & DAVE MILLIGAN
Still As Your Sleeping (HUDSON)

7 MARTIN SIMPSON
Home Recordings (TOPIC)

8 TRU
No Fixed Abode (TRU)

9 PATTERSON DIPPER
Unearthing (PD)

10 KATHERINE PRIDDY
The Eternal Rocks Beneath
(NAVIGATOR)

30

YOLA
Stand For Myself
(EASY EYE SOUND)

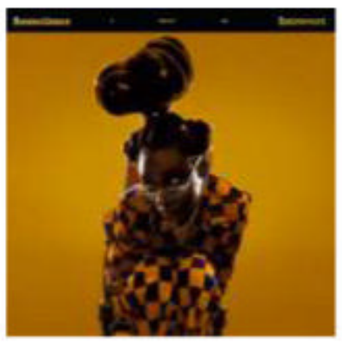
If the Bristol singer's 2019 solo debut introduced her as a country-soul outrider who'd finally made it to her Nashville spiritual home, this classy sequel expanded the remit. Dan Auerbach (more ubiquitous than ever this year) produced and co-wrote again, as Yola's broader tastes, poppier ambitions and political engagement became apparent. Another example, too, in Dancing Away In Tears, of a 2021 stealth trend: conscious homages to the Sound Of Philadelphia.
Standout track: Dancing Away In Tears

29

FIELD MUSIC
Flat White Moon
(MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES)

Peter and David Brewis's ability to come at a good tune from an unorthodox angle remained prominent on this, their eighth Field Music album. But alongside the prog-baroque tricksiness of Invisible Days and the mathematical avant-funk of No Pressure, there was also a certain streamlining, so that the likes of Do Me A Favour flaunted their catchiness as well as their cleverness. All the better to showcase their Beatles love, too.
Standout track: Orion From The Street

28



LITTLE SIMZ
Sometimes I Might Be Introvert (AGE 101)

Introversion was articulated on a massive scale by rapper Simbiatu 'Little Simz' Ajikawo on her fourth album, a very personal investigation of black British experience that incorporated orchestral soul, Smokey Robinson samples, The Crown's Emma Corrin reprising her best Princess Diana impression, and much more. One to file alongside *Kiwanuka*, another multi-faceted major statement with a key role for Brit soul producer *de nos jours*, Inflo.
Standout track: Point And Kill

27

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM
Lindsey Buckingham
(RHINO)

Buckingham's penchant for a scrap with former colleagues meant the arrival of his first solo album in 10 years was overshadowed by more cross words with Stevie Nicks. A shame: *Lindsey Buckingham*, recorded at home, was one more reiteration of its maker's pop inventiveness, flourishing outside the band. A document of domestic rather than professional break-down – just for once in Fleetwood Mac world, the two things were not interchangeable.
Standout track: Santa Rosa

26

MOGWAI
As The Love Continues
(ROCK ACTION)

Few musical genres have aestheticised the apocalyptic as well as post-rock, so it was fitting that two of its key protagonists made auspicious returns in 2021. While Canadian refuseniks Godspeed You! Black Emperor sounded relatively cheery, Mogwai's tenth exposed Stuart Braithwaite's touchingly human voice (on Ritchie Sacramento) amid the instrumental splendour: epic yet accessible, it was their first ever UK Number 1.
Standout track: Midnight Flit

25

THE BLACK KEYS
Delta Kream (EASY EYE SOUND/NONESUCH)

Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye Sound empire continued to grow and diversify (his 2021 production gigs included Yola, Aaron Frazer, Robert Finley and Tony Joe White). But his latest reunion with Pat Carney took the pair back to the Hill Country blues which inspired The Black Keys' early moves. Totemic Junior Kimbrough and RL Burnside sides were adroitly handled, with Kimbrough and Burnside guitar and bass vets along for the ride. A revitalised return.
Standout track: Louise

24

SAULT
Nine (FOREVER LIVING ORIGINALS)

After their two 2020 albums (*Black Is* and *Rise*) won widespread acclaim, producer Inflo's collective devised a cunning plan to keep their mystique: besides the usual interview/photos ban, their fifth album of progressive, politically-uncompromising London R&B was only available for 99 days before exiting streaming platforms. Frustrating for late arrivals, but succour came via *Mother*, a fine 2021 solo set by Sault's main vocalist, Cleo Sol.
Standout track: Alcohol

23

TEENAGE FANCLUB
Endless Arcade (PEMA)

Gerard Love's 2018 departure dismantled a great songwriting triumvirate of the last 30 years, but it also led to more Norman Blake and Raymond McGinley contributions on this rueful and lovely 11th. Full of middle-aged reflectiveness – Blake's songs told of a long-term relationship break-up with gentle dignity – those mellow jangles still seductive. As I'm More Inclined noted, "This life is complicated."
Standout track: Everything Is Falling Apart

22

AMYL AND THE SNIFFERS
Comfort To Me
(ROUGH TRADE)

It'd be doing Amy Taylor and her Oz rowdies a disservice to suggest they'd become more sophisticated, exactly: the second Sniffers album still sounded like a Kathleen Hanna/Motörhead hybrid toughing it out on the Melbourne pub scene. But *Comfort To Me* was an evolution from 2019's self-titled debut: road-hard chops; Taylor's feminist perspective; even better tunes played with a skill that never diluted their punch.
Standout track: Security

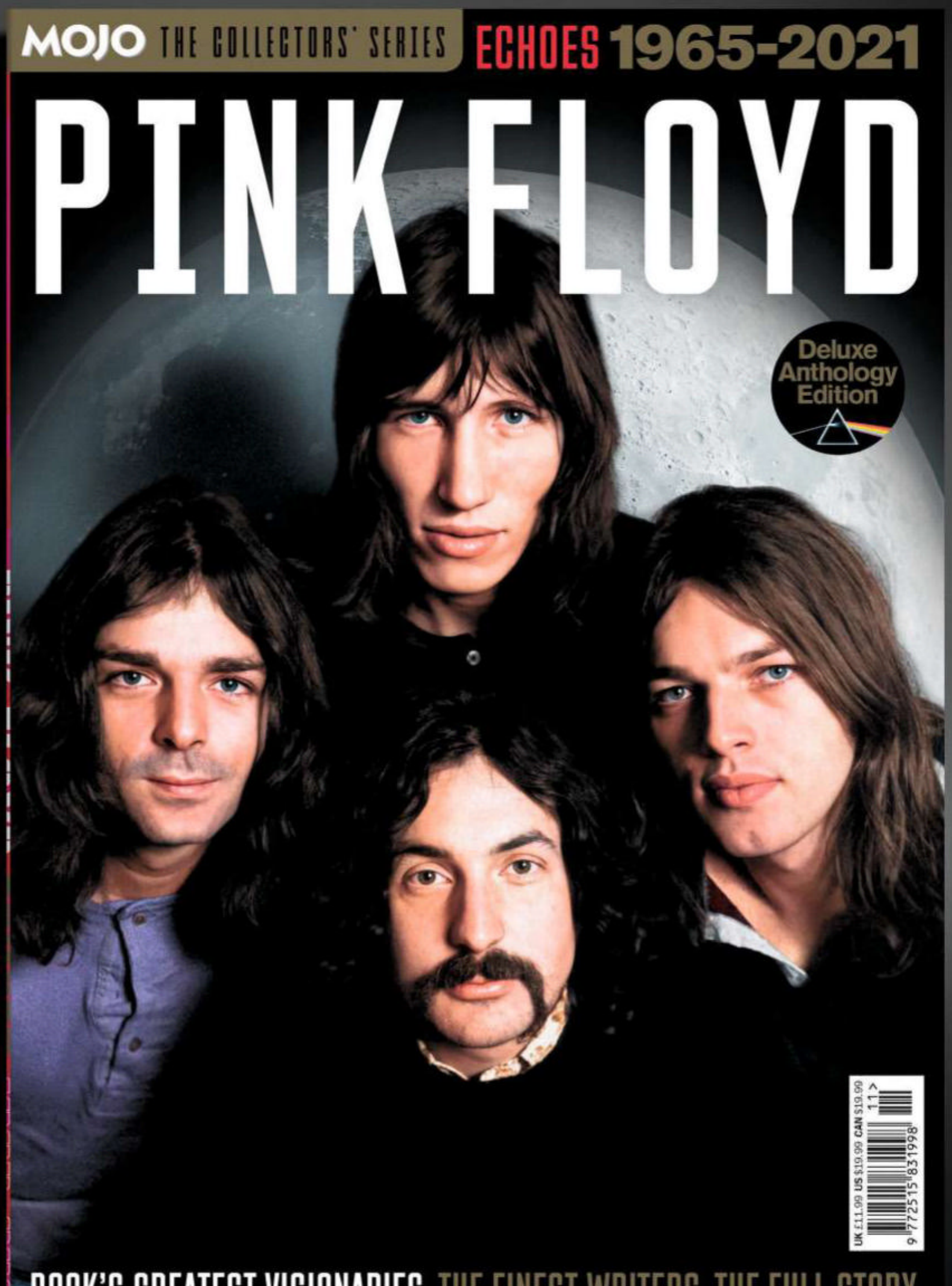
21

THE BUG
Fire (NINJA TUNE)

Kevin Martin's taste for urban noise has endured myriad projects in the last three decades (famously in Techno Animal). His uncompromising industrial bass culture reached its apotheosis on 2008's *London Zoo*, whose raging hip-hop/dancehall modifications were fruitfully revisited on *Fire*. Moor Mother and an array of rappers trod the blasted terrain, but it was poet Roger Robinson who sounded the keynote: a threnody for those lost in the Grenfell Tower disaster.
Standout track: The Missing

Suleika Müller, Getty

PINK FLOYD. MOJO'S FINEST WRITERS.
THE FULL STORY. IN A SINGLE DELUXE VOLUME.



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THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

SOUNDTRACKS

Compiled by ANDREW MALE

1 CLINT MANSELL
In The Earth (INVADA)

2 MICA LEVI
Zola (A24/INVADA)

3 AARON CUPPLES
Island Of The Hungry Ghosts (PAN)

4 STEPHEN VITIELLO
Soundtracks For Lynne Sachs Vol 1 & 2 (ROOM 40)

5 SARAH WARNE
Des (SILVA SCREEN)

6 ALBERTO LUCENDO
Wonderful Losers (MIDIRA)

7 EMILIE LEVIENAISE-FARROUCH
Censor (INVADA)

8 GAZELLE TWIN & MAX DE WARDENER
The Power (INVADA)

9 GAZELLE TWIN
Welcome To The Blumhouse: Nocturne (INVADA/LAKESHORE)

10 TIM HECKER
The North Water (INVADA)

BLUES

Compiled by TONY RUSSELL

1 CHRISTONE 'KINGFISH' INGRAM
662 (ALLIGATOR)

2 TIA CARROLL
You Gotta Have It (LITTLE VILLAGE)

3 CHRIS CAIN
Raisin' Cain (ALLIGATOR)

4 CHRIS BERGSON
All I Got Left (2 SHIRTS)

5 NEW MOON JELLY ROLL FREEDOM ROCKERS Vol. 2 (STONY PLAIN)

6 EDDIE MARTIN
The Birdcage Sessions (BLUEBLOOD)

7 CAROLYN WONDERLAND
Tempting Fate (ALLIGATOR)

8 SMOKEY HOGG
The Texas Blues Of… (ACE)

9 VARIOUS
Matchbox Bluesmaster Series Sets 1-5 (MATCHBOX)

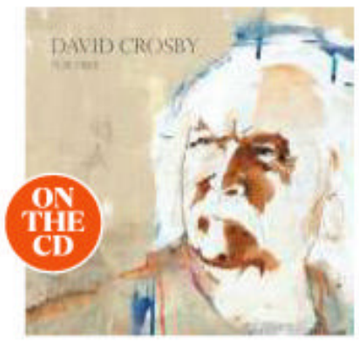
10 VARIOUS
Something Inside Of Me: Unreleased Masters & Demos From The British Blues Years 1963-1976 (WIENERWORLD)

20

MDOU MOCTAR
Afrique Victime (MATADOR)

"It nearly made me sick, just how incredible it was," Mdou Moctar told MOJO of the time in 2014 when he first heard Jimi Hendrix. Since then the Niger guitarist has channelled that influence as a guitar hero pushing the Saharan blues sound to breathtaking new highs. Evidence could be found in abundance on *Afrique Victime*, an album that secured Moctar and his band's position alongside Tinariwen in the Tuareg rock premier league.
Standout track: Chismiten

19



DAVID CROSBY
For Free (THREE BLIND MICE/BMG)

Since 1971's sensational *If I Could Only Remember My Name* (reissued this year), Croz has released only seven more solo long-players. Remarkably, though, five of them have come during this past decade, including this latest gem. A handsome Donald Fagen collaboration, and a cover of Joni Mitchell's For Free (to file alongside Lana Del Rey's version) were highlights. Most prevalent, though, was the sense of a great artist seizing his moment, at last.
Standout track: I Think I

18

IDLES
Crawler (PARTISAN)

If the Bristol group's previous albums had railed intensely against the iniquities of modern Britain, album number four found singer Joe Talbot turning his scalding energies in on himself, the analysis of his addiction proving he could be as self-flagellating as he was self-righteous. New subject matter required new musical shades, too: and so along with vituperative punk, electronic noise and soul – even doo-wop, brilliantly – entered the volatile Idles mix.
Standout track: The Beachland Ballroom

17

THE WAR ON DRUGS
I Don't Live Here Anymore (ATLANTIC)

A smart, self-aware and occasionally very anxious mythographer of the American heart-land, Adam Granduciel further fine-tuned his big music on the fifth WOD album, ensuring there was subtlety and nuance underpinning the grandest gestures. Stadium-phase Simple Minds were a new influence among the familiar Dylan, Bruce, Petty and Neu! touchstones. But increasingly, Granduciel had the air of a peer rather than an acolyte.
Standout track: Harmonia's Dream

16

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
The Ultra Vivid Lament (COLUMBIA)

Media-savvy operatives in perpetuity, the Manics heralded their 14th album with the typically intriguing teaser of "The Clash playing Abba". In truth, *The Ultra Vivid Lament* was as much Abba playing The Clash, spleen, barb and erudition (a song about Gwen and Augustus John) packaged with a subversive, radio-friendly sheen. As ever, the gambit worked, not least when Mark Lanegan duetted on Blank Diary Entry.
Standout track: Happy Bored Alone

15

DRY CLEANING
New Long Leg (4AD)

Hard to improve on Victoria Segal's description of Dry Cleaning singer Florence Shaw as "joining dots between Mark E Smith and Barbara Pym" in her MOJO review of this fine debut. If some Brit post-punk contemporaries had an off-the-peg eccentricity, Dry Cleaning were more creative *bricoleurs*: deadpan more than indignant; literary collagists with a streamlined sound that could evoke both Pulp and Sonic Youth simultaneously.
Standout track: Leafy

14

BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD
For The First Time (NINJA TUNE)

Like Dry Cleaning, fellow debutants Black Country, New Road brought new dimensions to post-punk on an exceptional first album. In the latter septet's case, the vast musical vistas encompassed Slint, klezmer and free jazz – a lot more accessible than that sounds on paper – while frontman Isaac Wood declaimed with surrealist vigour, good jokes and no little poignancy: "I told you I loved you, in front of Black Midi."
Standout track: Track X

13

SLEAFORD MODS
Spare Ribs (ROUGH TRADE)

Tricky, perhaps, to pitch an album containing the line, "It's such a shame that every person that I meet needs smacking in the head," as evidence of a more reflective Sleaford Mods. But the vitriol that peppered the 11th Mods album came with even more desolate perspectives: a dispatch from the Brexit plague island that found Jason Williamson beyond the end of his tether. But the music was ever more inventive: the UK's LCD Soundsystem.
Standout track: Mork N Mindy

12

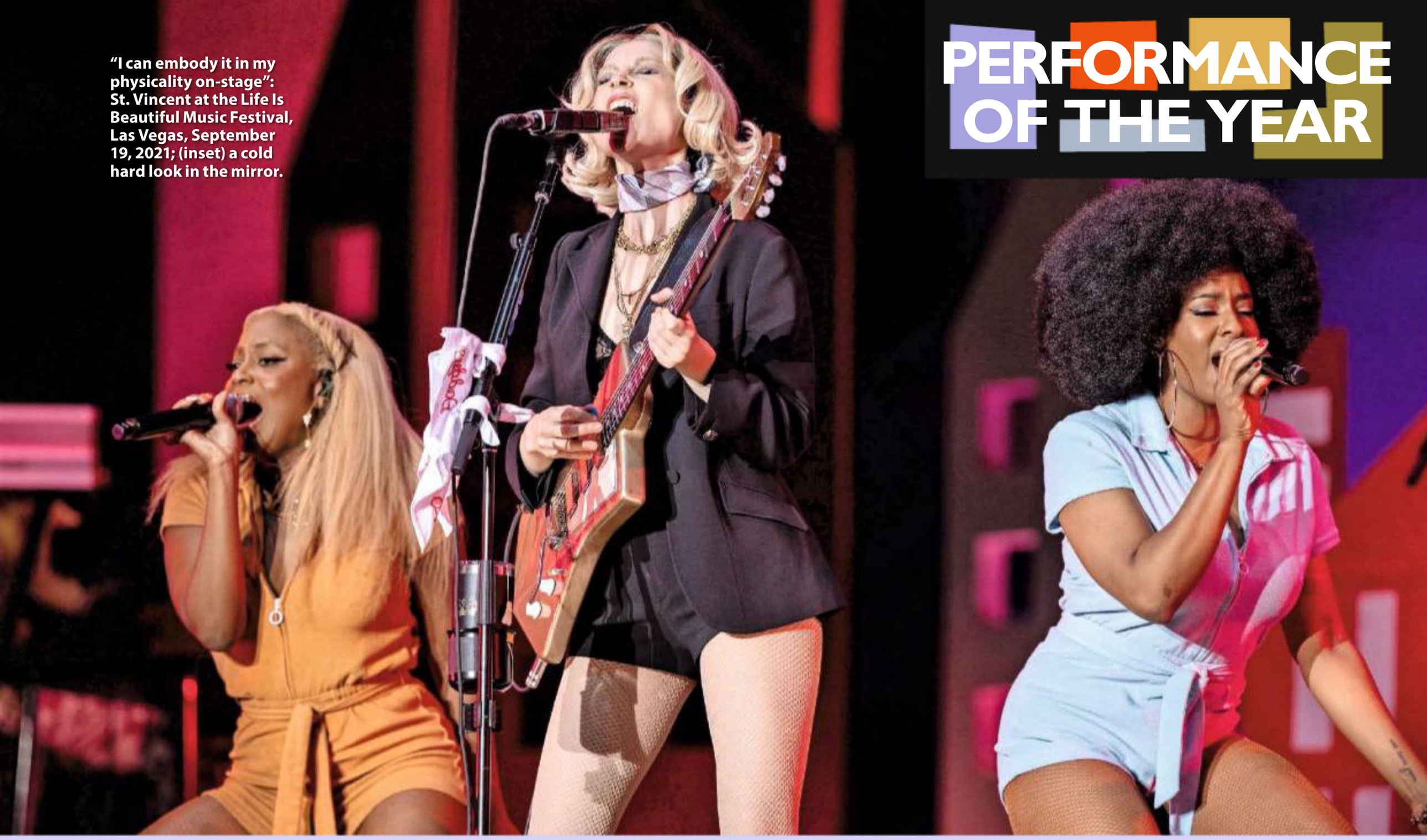
THE WEATHER STATION
Ignorance (FAT POSSUM)

Tamara Lindeman's previous four albums as The Weather Station had stealthily progressed from acoustic folk to a broader, bolder sound, but *Ignorance* saw a radical leap forward: a richly textured pop record, with jazz, organic disco and Talk Talk grace notes, that presented climate grief in the language of post-relationship trauma. A brilliant singer-songwriter, making an original and heartfelt poetic response to the tragedy of our age.
Standout track: Parking Lot

11

JOHN GRANT
Boy From Michigan (BELLA UNION)

A summer spent crashing at Elton John's London pad could have betokened a return to *Queen Of Denmark*-style AOR. But Grant's fifth solo album, produced in Iceland by the reliably odd Cate Le Bon, pushed his avant-synthpop tendencies to the fore (Chris & Cosey were a benchmark). The lush melodies remained, though, with Grant reframed as a radical crooner as he conjured memories of smalltown sexual awakenings.
Standout track: Mike And Julie



"I can embody it in my physicality on-stage": St. Vincent at the Life Is Beautiful Music Festival, Las Vegas, September 19, 2021; (inset) a cold hard look in the mirror.

"I'm Trying To Go Deeper And Go Deeper."

Who was ST. VINCENT this year? A great bunch of guys, finds TOM DOYLE.

It's been a standout year for Annie Clark AKA St. Vincent. Springtime saw the arrival of her masterly seventh album, *Daddy's Home*, which used Clark's father's release from prison (after serving a dozen years for fraud) as the springboard into an album inspired by his '70s record collection. With it came a new persona – a down-at-heel '70s glamourpuss marking time 'til cocktail hour – a look she took on the road with a crack band featuring Beck sidekicks Justin Meldal-Johnsen and Jason Falkner and Bowie's *Blackstar* drummer Mark Guiliana. Meanwhile, the grey area between performance and reality saw further exploration with the Covid-delayed appearance of Clark's psychological mockumentary, The Nowhere Inn, where she plays rock star 'St. Vincent' opposite Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein, playing wannabe film-maker 'Carrie Brownstein'. Confused? That's the idea.

Congratulations – *Daddy's Home* is MOJO's Number 2 Album Of The Year.

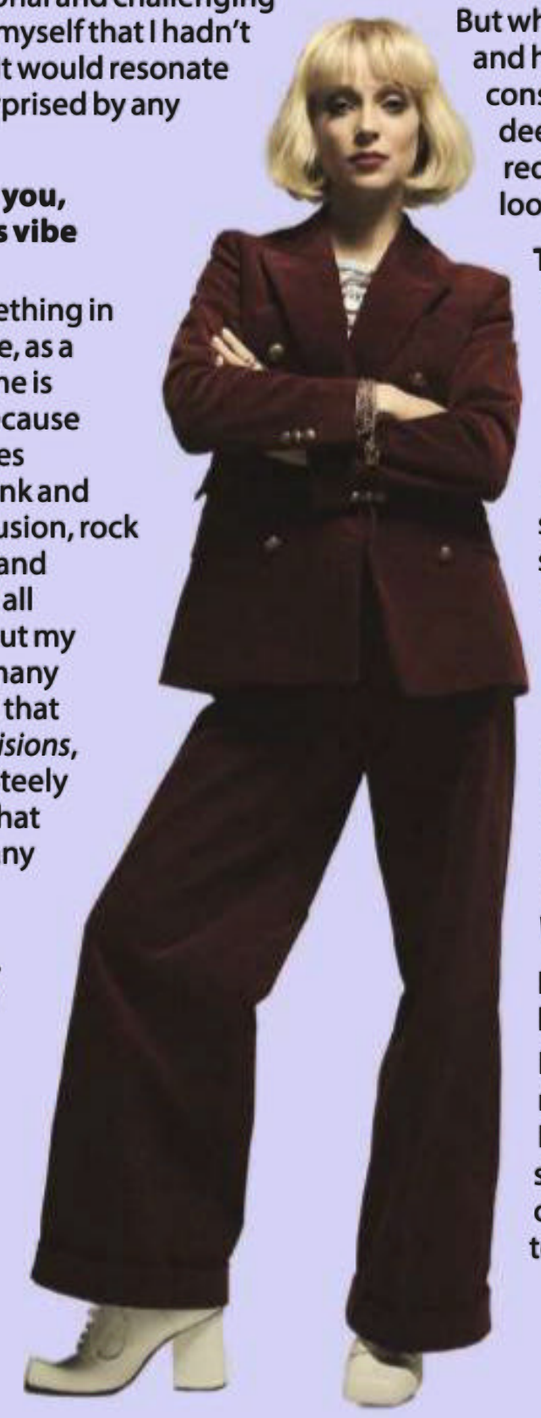
Well, thank you. I feel very, very honoured to be, like, co-signed by MOJO. You've been carrying the banner of rock'n'roll for a long time.

The response to the record has been hugely positive…

I never know if anyone is going to like anything. I have no idea. I just knew I'd made a record that, for me, was deep and personal and challenging and made me go places in myself that I hadn't gone. So, I just hoped that it would resonate with people. I'm always surprised by any reaction, good or bad.

What was the appeal, for you, of the early- and mid-'70s vibe of the record?

I mean, there was just something in the water back then. For me, as a musician, that period of time is really hallowed ground. Because you have all these influences converging – you've got funk and soul happening, and jazz fusion, rock music, psychedelic music, and people were putting them all together. When I think about my favourite records ever, so many of them were made during that period. Whether it's *Innervisions*, Steve Wonder or, y'know, Steely Dan, *Can't Buy A Thrill*. It is that kind of true fusion of so many things. And as a musician, that's heavy. It's not, like, three chords and the truth. It's a little heavier and I felt I wasn't a good enough musician to approach it, until now. And approach it by getting to learn the language and not be a tourist or not do shtick, but really be inside of it.



Your new look and stage persona: how does it feel to inhabit that character?

Well, I get to be everybody in the album. I was writing the stories, which are stories of people being down and out downtown, y'know. I've been the girl with last night's clothes on, on the morning train. I've been the girl at the holiday party who's bereft and who reveals herself by the things that she's trying to hide. I've kind of lived all these characters. I feel like I can embody it in my physicality on-stage.

In The Melting Of The Sun, you seem to hold yourself up alongside your heroes (Joni Mitchell, Nina Simone, Tori Amos) and find yourself somehow lacking. Do you suffer from imposter syndrome?

I don't suffer necessarily from imposter syndrome. But what I am conscious of is just how amazing and how deep my heroes are. And I am just conscious of trying to go deeper and go deeper. I guess I want to be great, so that requires a certain level of, like, cold hard look in the mirror, in order to get better.

The Nowhere Inn film seems to be all about performance: the thin line between fiction and reality. Have you ever lost sight of where that line is or should be?

I've lost the line between performance and person, but more than that, I've just sort of lost my line as a person. I would say this was at the end of the self-titled album [in 2014] and maybe the beginning of the Masseduction tour. I've got kind of a trad jazz melody standard ethos. It's like, "Well, learn the melody, and then you can improvise." But I sort of lost the melody, as it were. I definitely a few times lost my centre and was kind of more swaying in the wind or, like, a sort of victim of the wind. (*Laughs*) *Victim Of The Wind*… my new album.

Finally: what's the best thing you've heard all year?

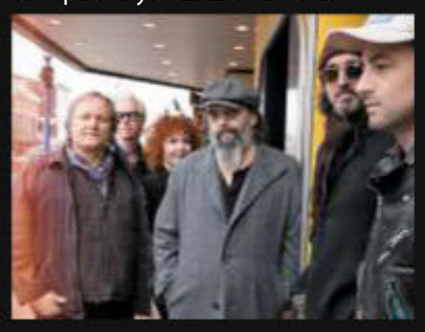
I love this Russian artist Kate NV and her record *Room For The Moon*. I think that East-West cultural divide is still there to some degree. It's like, "Where did this come from?" It just feels actually alien to me in a way that is so exciting.

Zackery Michael, Backgrid

THE 75 BEST ALBUMS OF 2021

AMERICANA

Compiled by SYLVIE SIMMONS



1 **STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES**
J.T. (NEW WEST)

2 **SHANNON McNALLY**
The Waylon Sessions (COMPASS)

3 **MALCOLM HOLCOMBE**
Tricks Of The Trade (GYPSY EYES)

4 **SON VOLT**
Electro Melodier (TRANSMIT SOUND)

5 **ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS**
Raise The Roof (WARNER MUSIC)

6 **TONY JOE WHITE**
Smoke From The Chimney (EASY EYE SOUND)

7 **LUKAS NELSON & PROMISE OF THE REAL**
A Few Stars Apart (FANTASY)

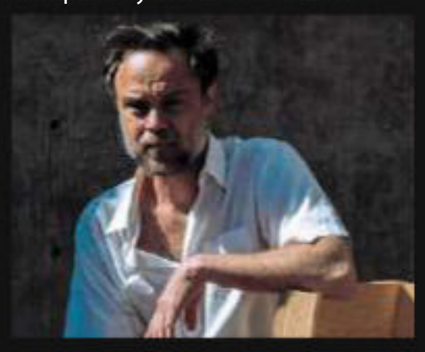
8 **LORETTA LYNN**
Still Woman Enough (LEGACY)

9 **FELICE BROTHERS**
From Dreams To Dust (YEP ROC)

10 **RHIANNON GIDDENS & FRANCESCO TURRISI**
They're Calling Me Home (NONESUCH)

WORLD

Compiled by DAVID HUTCHEON



1 **RODRIGO AMARANTE**
Drama (POLYVINYL)

2 **FEMI KUTI/MADE KUTI**
Legacy+ (PARTISAN)

3 **VARIOUS**
Changüí: The Sound Of Guantánamo (PETALUMA)

4 **ALOSTMEN**
Kologo (STRUT)

5 **AROOJ AFTAB**
Vulture Prince (NEW AMSTERDAM)

6 **TOUMANI DIABATÉ & THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**
Korolén (WORLD CIRCUIT)

7 **CARWYN ELLIS & RIO 18**
Mas (BANANA & LOUIE)

8 **MDOU MOCTAR**
Afrique Victim (MATADOR)

9 **ORQUESTA AKOKAN**
16 Rayos (DAPTONE)

10 **WAU WAU COLLECTIF**
Yaral Sa Doom (SAHEL SOUNDS)

10

VILLAGERS
Fever Dreams (DOMINO)

"As you get older," Villagers' Conor O'Brien told MOJO this year, "you realise that music is where you need to go for the joy rather than the dread." Hence the sixth Villagers long-player, while not quite untouched by sadness, was a woozy world away from the angsty indie-folk of O'Brien's early records: a chamber-pop fantasia that audaciously – and successfully – stretched out to embrace full-on psychedelic soul.
Standout track: The First Day

9

ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS
Raise The Roof (WARNER MUSIC)

The first Plant & Krauss album serendipitously coincided with Led Zeppelin's 2007 reunion; its long-awaited sequel arrived in time for the 50th anniversary of Led Zep *IV*, and was again strong enough to hold its own against revivalism. Brit folk was added to the country and blues mix, T Bone Burnett's all-star friends provided empathetic backup, and there was even a Zeppish portent to their take on Jimmy Reed's High And Lonesome. A magical rematch.
Standout track: It Don't Bother Me

8

SONS OF KEMET
Black To The Future (IMPULSE!)

Shabaka Hutchings' role as figurehead of the UK jazz revival was compounded by another fine, fiery album by his flagship project. Kemet's strength, though, was ultimately collective: from core members like vibrational tuba man Theon Cross and drummer Tom Skinner (also busy in Radiohead spin-off The Smile); and from rappers, poets and instrumentalists drawn into their orbit – Kojey Radical, Angel Bat Dawid and Moor Mother, especially, on this fourth outing.
Standout track: Hustle

7

THE CORAL
Coral Island (RUN ON)

Dilapidated fairgrounds, Arcade Hallucinations, "the smell of candyfloss on the offshore breeze"; if it sometimes seemed The Coral had spent the best part of 20 years building a psychedelic theme park on the Wirral, their 10th album – a double – tackled the job in earnest. *Coral Island* was the ambitious, intoxicating statement of a band playing to their strengths: The Coral's very own *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*, with James and Ian Skelly's grandfather in the Stanley Unwin role.
Standout track: Faceless Angel

6

PAUL WELLER
Fat Pop (Volume 1) (POLYDOR)

With touring a non-starter, Weller's immense energies were focused on the studio, bouncing out of one fine album (2020's *On Sunset*) straight into another. *Fat Pop*, as the title implied, was a diverse, punchy collection of what in another time would've been 7-inches: Weller at his most direct, whether working in punk or soul idioms, or all points in between. The "*Volume 1*" parenthesis was less of a wry threat, more a tantalising promise of yet more to come.
Standout track: Testify

5

NICK CAVE & WARREN ELLIS
Carnage (GOLIATH)

With the Bad Seeds scattered to the four winds, Nick Cave called on one, first lieutenant Warren Ellis, for his pandemic exorcism. Percolating electronics and heartbreaking loss were familiar from 2019's *Ghosteen* ("I'm travelling appallingly alone on a singular road"), but *Carnage* also re-introduced an older version of Cave: wrathful Old Testament enforcer, navigating absurd tableaux (some strong Grinderman callbacks) with a taste for gospel choirs and dick jokes.
Standout track: White Elephant

4

LOW
Hey What (SUB POP)

2018's *Double Negative*, bathed in distortion and electrostatic, became the most acclaimed album of Low's career, and *Hey What* – their 13th, but first solely as a duo of Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker – hardly compromised on that radicalism; My Bloody Valentine seemed a key antecedent. Nevertheless, the new songs that emerged out of the noise were more strident and anthemic; hymnals that, heroically, now sounded as resilient as they did awesomely apocalyptic.
Standout track: Hey

Lana Del Rey: elevated to the classical pantheon.

3

LANA DEL REY
Chemtrails Over The Country Club (INTERSCOPE)

For the follow-up to 2019's career-defining *Norman Fucking Rockwell*, Lana Del Rey was ever keener to manoeuvre herself into a classical pantheon, namechecking Joan Baez, Stevie Nicks and Joni Mitchell (covering, faithfully, the latter's For Free). The presumption was justified by another superb set of California morality tales, now with as much sun – country, too – as LA noir. Like a Mazzy Star elevated to superstardom, mystique intact.
Standout track: Dance Til We Die

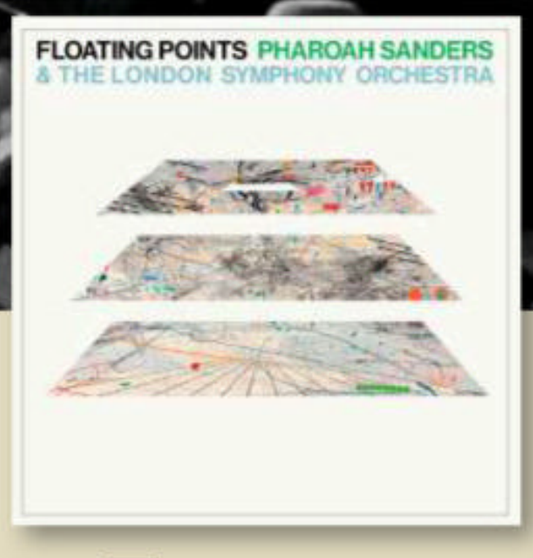
2

ST. VINCENT
Daddy's Home (LOMA VISTA)

Joni also got name-checked on Annie Clark's remarkable sixth album as St. Vincent, alongside Nina Simone, Tori Amos, Candy Darling and a litany of heroes from sepia-tinged bohemia. Where 2017's *Masseduction* was high-concept contemporary machine pop, *Daddy's Home* was warmer, groovier, enriched by references to the Stevie, Sly and '70s songwriter albums that Clark had enjoyed with her father: the Daddy of the title, released from prison in 2019.
Standout track: …At The Holiday Party

Getty, Eric Welles Nystrom

Gravitational pull: Pharoah Sanders (left) and Sam Shepherd, "meditative, peaceful and patient" playing.



"It Seems Quite A Niche Idea, Right?"

1 FLOATING POINTS, PHAROAH SANDERS & THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Promises (LUAKA BOP)

How jazz, classical and electronica combined on the album that healed 2021. By STEPHEN WORTHY.

LIKE MANY of the greatest records, MOJO's Album Of 2021 owes something to serendipity. The genesis of what would become Floating Points' third LP began with Mancunian jazztronica boffin Sam Shepherd in a Los Angeles studio with saxophone legend Pharoah Sanders and continued, in the summer of 2020, amid the London Symphony Orchestra. What emerged were nine movements of generically agnostic beauty – part spiritual jazz, part contemporary classical, an ever-giving balm in anxious times. The suite's recurring melody was played by Shepherd on a harpsichord he spied in Echo Park's Sargent Recorders studio, slowed down by 25 per cent for the finished album. But the main event is Sanders: achingly delicate on Movement 1; rich and reflective throughout Movements 4 and 5; intensely powerful at the zenith of Movement 7.

"Both of us are surprised," says Shepherd of the pair's response to the avalanche of plaudits that have ensued. "There are giggles every now and then about how it's gone."

***Promises* is MOJO's Album Of The Year. How does that feel?**

Is that right? Oh sick. Wow, I had no idea it would connect with so many different people. It's been very nice to see people enjoying it. I didn't know what I was expecting, but it certainly wasn't this. It seems quite a niche idea, right? To have four chords repeating for 46 minutes. For that to become something that wins MOJO Album Of The Year is very surprising and so kind.

The album grew into a bigger project than originally planned, right?

I'd taken a Buchla system out to LA. When we had some time between sessions, I got Pharoah playing into it one day, getting all sorts of weird noises out. He was playing with headphones on while I was doing this, and I recorded that as well – not just playing into this machine, but actually playing along with it. That was very cool. He really listens to all the sounds that are going on. Sounds he's never heard as he's not played with these machines before. It was a sonic musical experience for him as well, I think I can say. In his wise old age, he's still listening with such youth and in trepidation of all these new sonic environments.

What else did you learn from him?

On a musical level a kind of patience. In the studio I'm very much, Let's do this! I feel there's a pressure within those environments to get stuff done. Whereas with Pharoah it feels the opposite. There's no rush. There's a peace to it. And he listens and listens and listens… then plays it just the once. And it bangs! That's one of the key things I got from him – chill out a bit in the studio and spend more time listening.

You've known Pharoah for a while. What do you talk about when you're hanging out?

I was hearing stories from the jazz era, and he'd casually refer to very influential jazz musicians by their first name. I'd be like, "John? John as in…? Oh, OK. *That* John!" Very candid tales of those years. It seemed like a magical time. Every time I talk about him now, my mind's like – BOOM! – blown again.

Was it daunting working with the LSO?

Actually, it was really easy. They play it, nail it and it's done. We're talking about the greatest players in the world. I guess it was intimidating when I couldn't remember the Italian term for a certain technique and had to ask them. But they were very welcoming to this kid who can't remember the name for 'staccato'.

> **"In his wise old age, Pharoah's still listening with such youth."**
> **Sam Shepherd**

Why do you think the album has resonated with people? It's highly contemplative and calming. Is what we've lived through one reason?

I never normally speculate, but I think that as well. It's been a time where if you present someone with a 46-minute-long piece of music, to be listened to in one go, people are going to give it time. Listening to it now, having given it a rest, it has this sort of gravitational pull. There's something about it that's quite meditative, peaceful and patient. Having to analyse something I made feels a little alien to me. But it's very nice that it has connected. It's super-cool.

And finally – what's the best thing *you've* heard all year?

I've been really enjoying the Cleo Sol album [*Mother*]. And all the Sault records that she's involved with are on heavy rotation here. I need to look on my Spotify (*checks*). Yes – *The Best Of Tahira Syed*. It's on EMI Pakistan. It's Pakistani folk music, from 1976. It happens to come on all the time, and I never turn it off. The sound of the record, her voice – so beautiful.

THE BEST REISSUES OF 2021

Still going steady: Buzzcocks (from left) John Maher, Steve Diggle, Pete Shelley, Steve Garvey.

20

LEWIS TAYLOR
Lewis Taylor
(BE WITH)

Double vinyl reissue of sonic auteur Lewis Taylor's gloriously mood-altering R&B debut from 1996; a bubbling hot, psychedelic soul stew beloved of Bowie, Elton John, D'Angelo and MOJO's Jim Irvin.

19

CARROLL THOMPSON
Hopelessly In Love
(TROJAN)

A 40th anniversary remaster for Carroll Thompson's lovers rock debut added extended 12-inch mixes, to ensure that its tender blend of Jamaican roots, US soul and romantic '70s pop still lingered.

18

BUZZCOCKS
Complete United Artists Singles 1977-1980
(DOMINO)

Their initial run of 12 totemic pop punk singles on repro 7-inch vinyl, with the original Malcolm Garrett sleeves and a booklet by Clinton Heylin. Turned out swell after all.

17

JOHN LENNON/ PLASTIC ONO BAND
John Lennon/ Plastic Ono Band
(CAPITOL/UMC)

The real Primal Scream as Lennon let it all out in 1970's remixed solo debut: parental loss, grief, class, hellish religions and more in hard-hitting, Spector-produced rock. Lots of extras.

16

FAUST
1971-1974
(BUREAU B)

The most ungovernable Krautrockers' four original LPs, one unreleased album and two potent discs of outtakes: from minimal thud to tape delirium to tuneful balms and reverberations that defied category.

15

THE BEATLES
Let It Be
(APPLE/UMC)

With solo albums pending, the Fabs almost got back to where they once belonged, a playing and inventive band – Two Of Us, I've Got A Feeling, Get Back, title track – with Billy Preston guesting. Extras fascinated.

14

VARIOUS
Edo Funk Explosion Vol. 1
(ANALOG AFRICA)

A triumvirate of southern Lagos legends – Sir Victor Uwaifo, Osayomore Joseph and Akaba Man – all fluent in rock, soul and disco, parsed the rhythms of the region in the 1980s. *Vol. 2* eagerly awaited.

13

GEORGE HARRISON
All Things Must Pass
(APPLE/UMC)

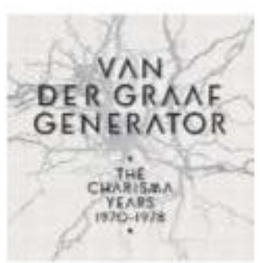
In a crate, with gnomes, or as a 'simpler' 6-CD set, the guitarist's already expansive triple album was enlarged further, remixes giving horns/rhythm sections a more 'modern' presence.

12

LAURA NYRO
American Dreamer
(MADFISH/SNAPPER)

The many colours of Bronx-born Laura Nyro mingled on this set of her first seven studio albums, spanning 1967-78, plus a disc of rarities. R&B, soul, jazz, girl groups, gospel and Brill Building pop brilliance.

11



VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
The Charisma Years 1970-1978
(VIRGIN/UMC)

Driven by saxes, Hammond and dramatic delivery, across 20 '70s audio-visual discs of prog chaos magic. On *Godbluff* and *Pawn Hearts*, the angst and trauma were exquisite.

10

PRINCE
Welcome 2 America
(SONY LEGACY)

More revelations from the copious Paisley Park vaults, this belter of Princely funk was full to the brim with tips of the hat to Clinton grooves and Curtis thoughts. DeLuxe edition had terrific 2011 gig on Blu-ray.

9

THE WHO
The Who Sell Out
(POLYDOR/UMC)

Massive expansion of the '67 classic that combined pop smarts, early psych and crunching rock beaming from an imagined commercial radio station. Who studio outtakes and Townshend demos starred in extras.

8

ARETHA FRANKLIN
Aretha
(RHINO)

Focusing on '67-79 Atlantic, nodding to her Columbia and Arista eras, this full career in 81 tracks box had unheards, revealing works-in-progress and genuine curios, such as The Boy From Bombay.

7

JONI MITCHELL
Archives Volume 2: The Reprise Years 1968-1971
(RHINO)

Revealing sketches, related live sets and treasure hidden on the way to *Blue*. Fresh discoveries included 1968 studio take Come To The Sunshine, 1969's Jesus, and *Blue* off-cut Hunter.

6

BOB DYLAN
Springtime In New York: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 16 (1980-1985)
(COLUMBIA/LEGACY)

Ever intriguing, *Bootleg 16* found Dylan in the raw in the first half of a difficult decade for Bobwatchers. Pick: *Infidels*' outtake of Blind Willie McTell with full band.

5

SPIRITUALIZED
Lazer Guided Melodies
(FAT POSSUM)

1992's inaugural transmission: a four-part suite as J. Spaceman veered between coming up, coming down and lovelessness as his dreams of rock'n'roll roots bathed the blues in brilliant white light.

4

DAVID BOWIE
The Width Of A Circle
(PARLOPHONE)

Fixating on 1970, a BBC live special, sessions and rare tracks found folky rocker Bowie looking back at his past selves as the enthralling art-pop auteur of *Hunky Dory* came into being.

3

NEIL YOUNG
Archives Vol. II (1972-1976)
(REPRISE)

Eleven years after Vol. I, this 10-CD trove revealed Young's fraught but creatively fruitful post-*Harvest* years. Heaps of unreleased gems, fresh starts, U-turns and the odd refusal at 'the ditch'.

2

CAN
Live In Stuttgart 1975
(SPOON/MUTE)

Can finding a new way to exist without a singer. This cleaned-up live bootleg saw them roving supernaturally in improv ecstasies much freer than their studio albums of the time.

Getty

Helping hands: The Beach Boys feel the flow (from left) Carl Wilson, Mike Love, Brian Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Al Jardine.

"When We Fell Out Of Favour, We Grew Up"

1 THE BEACH BOYS Feel Flows: The Sunflower & Surf's Up Sessions 1969-1971 (CAPITOL/UMC)

A treasure chest from the post-*Smile* shipwreck of Hawthorne's finest thrilled us in 2021. AL JARDINE and BRUCE JOHNSTON receive MOJO's laurels from BILL DeMAIN.

EVEN HARDCORE Beach Boys fans well-versed in the bounty to be found in the years of Brian Wilson's evanescence were enthralled by the five discs of *Feel Flows*. But as a gratified Bruce Johnston and Al Jardine remind MOJO today, the period was anything but plain sailing for the band.

"We were just out of sync with the times," says Jardine. "To put it in surfing terms, sometimes you catch the perfect wave and take it as far as you can go. Other times, you know you're going to get wiped out. So you go under and start all over again."

In late 1969, waves had submerged The Beach Boys' boardwalk empire. No hits, no record deal, and with Brian sidelined, no creative leader. Yet they emerged from the fathoms not just with trinkets and curios, but awe-inspiring treasures worthy of *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*.

"When the famous surfer blond bushy-tailed guys fell out of favour, we grew up," says Bruce Johnston. "And that period from '69-71 was the highlight of my whole Beach Boy life."

Part of growing up was balancing fun, fun, fun with work, work, work.

"Every day, we were like journeyman carpenters," says Jardine. "We'd go in the studio and record. It didn't matter if it was something esoteric and weird. We regenerated, reinvented. The performance band was still in bondage to doing the hits, but in the studio, we were creating music for a future. We just didn't know the future would take quite this long to happen (*laughs*)."

With Brian "reclusing in his room", as Johnston puts it, Carl Wilson stepped up as unofficial leader. "No one can fill Brian's shoes. But Carl was able to manage some good traffic at that point. And Feel Flows is up there with The Trader as one of his shining moments as a writer."

Meanwhile, Jardine raves about Dennis Wilson's contributions, notably Forever and Sound Of Free. "Unfortunately, he had to compete with his brothers for track selection. But his songs were just, wow, right there, the way they hit you. He should've had more success than he did."

That's not to take anything away from their own songs. Jardine's eco-conscious meditation Don't Go Near The Water was prescient. "I thought maybe I should write about something more than just staying on top of the water riding the waves and instead look at what's underneath."

Meanwhile, Johnston's dewy memory lane waltz Disney Girls revealed him as a keen acolyte of Brian's orchestral pop. Of its inspiration, Johnston says, "Remember Marilyn on The Munsters? The nice, normal one. I was Mr Marilyn (*laughs*). I never did any drugs. I saw them undo Brian and some of my friends and thought, Oh my God. As a teenager in the Eisenhower '50s I was the same kind of square guy, holding my girlfriend's hand in the backseat of her parents' car while Old Cape Cod by Patti Page played."

BRIAN SPEAKS!

Or rather, *e-mails* MOJO about his most celebrated songs on *Feel Flows*.

'Til I Die: "It's what I was feeling in my soul and my heart at that time. And my love for life at the same time."

Surf's Up: "Really complex lyrics and the melody was such a beautiful feeling for me when I finished it."

Those songs and more are currently shoring up the setlists of two separate road bands. But how is touring against a lingering Covid backdrop? Johnston and Jardine's responses reveal not only political leanings but ongoing friction. "A lot of warm bodies in those seats, dying to get out of the house," says Johnston, who with Mike Love – and Love's son Christian – leads The Beach Boys. "We probably lost about four or five concerts. And I'm still living."

Jardine, who's out with Brian Wilson and Blondie Chaplin, says, "It's crappy. The demographic of our band and bands like the Stones are down about 50 per cent, because they don't want to come out and get exposed. It would be better in this day and age if we could all be together on the same stage at the same time." And with The Beach Boys' 60th anniversary coming in 2022, could that reunion perhaps happen? Jardine: "Brian's people want it. I want it. I'm sure Bruce does. So it's really up to Mike, if he wants to join the party or not." Johnston says, "I asked Mike about it and he said, 'Maybe we'll do a concert or two together. Who knows?'"

"I think he'll come around at some point," Jardine says. "We should do at least a dozen big shows in the major capitals. I mean, why can't we put the fans ahead of us for a change and give them what they want?"

Getty

“The best thing I’ve heard all year!”

The musical discoveries that salved and inspired MOJO’s stars of 2021.

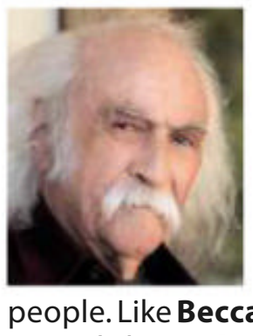
AARON FRAZER

Voice, and flams, of Durand Jones & The Indications.

Tako Tsubo by **L’Impératrice**, this fantastic Parisian band, who are the keepers of the French boogie sound that was popular in the late ’70s and ’80s, but who also feel very contemporary in a time when you’ve got Nile Rodgers producing Dua Lipa and disco-infused Top 40 sounds. Also **Yola**’s *Stand For Myself*, I think [producer] Dan Auerbach just knocked it out of the park with that one and I love how she embraced influences outside of soul and country and made it a little more daring. Then in a year that has been a little fraught, I find myself coming back to **Curtis Mayfield**’s *Curtis*. It’s like my compass, it’s all there in that record: how to write, how to craft songs. He’s an architect.

DAVID CROSBY

…takes a break from recording *another* album.



I’ve been frustrated by not being able to play live, but it’s given me a lot more time to write, and to listen to music, especially a lot of newer and younger people. Like **Becca Stevens**, she’s in my Lighthouse Band, and the songwriting on *Becca Stevens & The Secret Trio* is just stunning. I’m all about the writing, man. I produced Joni Mitchell’s first record and I’ve sung on Dylan’s records; the writing is key to whether you catch people’s interest or you just go along with the pack. The record I’ve listened to the most this year is **Sarah Jarosz**’s *World On The Ground*. She came out of bluegrass and a part of [acoustic folk trio] I’m With Her, but she’s gone back to playing on her own, and her writing has just got spectacular. **Chris Thile**’s album *Laysongs* – he’s the best mandolin player alive, but he sings and writes too, these utterly freaking brilliant changes and melodies. He’s completely not like anyone else in the world!

SHABAKA HUTCHINGS

Sons Of Kemet’s mouthpiece with a mouthpiece.

I’ve not been listening to albums specifically from this year. I even forgot that **Pino Palladino/Blake Mills**’s *Notes With Attachments* came out in 2021. It’s a great album in terms of compositional form. Musically it’s very different, but it reminds me of the place I was in when I started to put together **Sons Of Kemet**’s *Black To The Future*. I love its warm, organic atmosphere. **Madlib**’s *Sound Ancestors* contains one of my favourite tunes of recent memory – Road Of The Lonely Ones.

Shabaka Hutchings says, blow that shakuhachi.

I’ve listened to that more times than I’d like to admit. The album is such a deep work, I can tell it’ll keep growing on me.

I’ve been learning the shakuhachi flute, so I’ve been listening a lot to **Watazumi Doso Roshi** too. He’s a Japanese master shakuhachi player. He doesn’t specifically consider himself a musician, but uses music as a meditation and spiritual exercise in order to connect with nature, in the zen tradition. Before I started listening to *Hotchiku* [1968] I had this idea it would be this sort of passive, new age-y background music. It’s not at all. It’s pretty turbulent, unpredictable and full of dynamism. You can really feel the emotion, really sense the natural world.

MDOU MOCTAR

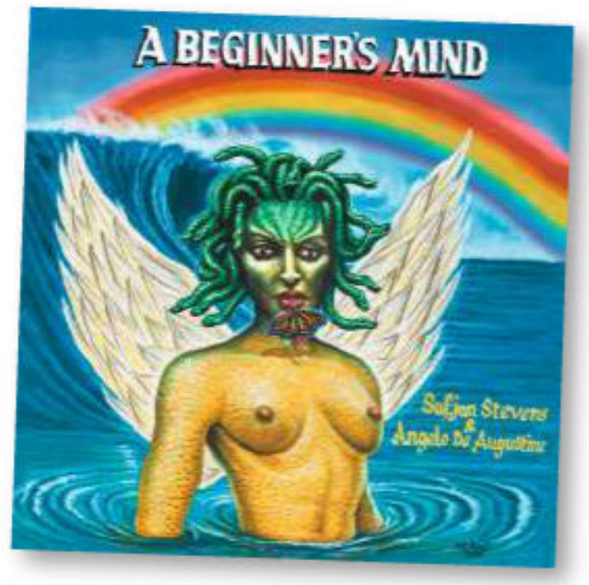
Niger’s guitar-slinger supreme.

Steve Gunn’s new record, *Other You*, is one of his best. Beautifully recorded by Rob Schnapf in LA, it’s a perfect blend of the guitar-vocal roots of Steve mixed with the right amount of production. *Sounds Of Pamoja* is another *amazing* compilation of Singeli music from Tanzania by one of the best labels out there – Nyege Nyege Tapes. This is rhythmically complex hyper electronic dance music. *Al Azraqayn* is the second album by **Karkhana**, a supergroup of experimental musicians from the Arab underground scenes. Highly highly recommended!

CONOR O’BRIEN

Villagers man and his head trips of 2021.

For me, the Best Thing is a toss-up between **Sufjan Stevens & Angelo De Augustine**’s album, *A Beginner’s Mind*, and *Promises*, the **Floating Points** album with **Pharoah Sanders**. The Floating Points record dropped in the middle of my Alice Coltrane/spiritual jazz obsession, so it arrived at the perfect moment. It’s like an inner journey – sometimes deeply intimate, then zooming out to take in the full orchestra.

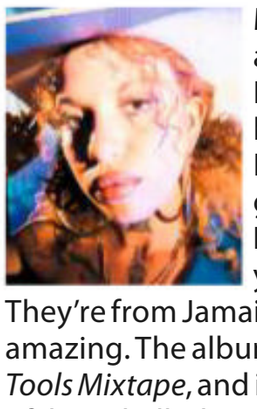


The Sufjan record – oh my God! There’s almost too much to say about it. I’ve listened to it again and again, googling the lyrics, ’cos each song is loosely based on a different movie, but they only use the movies as starting points. One of the songs, Back To Oz, is based on Return To Oz, which is the creepy, weird Wizard Of Oz sequel from 1985, where Dorothy’s getting electro-shock therapy. It haunted me as a child. And Sufjan turned it into this really trippy, dreamy track.

This year I returned to **Linda Perhacs**’s *Parallelograms*, because there’s a quote from an interview with her on my album. She has that Laurel Canyon hippy thing, but there’s a naivety that’s really appealing, a pure authenticity and a desire for a positive future for mankind. Then in terms of new discoveries from the past – the record that sticks out is *The Peaceful Side* [1963] by **Billy Strayhorn**, Duke Ellington’s right-hand man. It’s the sound of the dreamiest piano sprinkled with occasional sleepy barbershop backing vocals drenched in the creamiest reverb ever. I love it so much.

GREENTEA PENG

MOJO’s favourite shrooms-evangelising Britrapper.



Modern music isn’t always my go-to – I’m a creature of habit – but recently I discovered this group called **Equiknoxx**. Have you heard of them? They’re from Jamaica, and they’re amazing. The album is called *Basic Tools Mixtape*, and it’s this crazy merge of dancehall, electronic and hip-hop. Even the lyrics are mental – a bit of Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, a bit of Major Lazer, a bit of Roots Manuva. I was immediately, “Wow, I need to work with these guys.” Listen to Urban Snare Cypher. It’s wicked.

Lord Apex dropped an album this year – *Smoke Sessions 3*. Lord Apex is a G. He’s from west London, worked a lot with Denzel Himself and KEYAH/BLU. They’re a cool bunch, man. It feels

Stefy Pocket, Alysse Gafkjen, Udoma Janssen, Donald Milne, Anna Webber, Rebecca Lupton

like a '90s hip-hop album; it has that kind of grit. Not as shiny and polished as a lot of trap-type rap.

The **Denzel Himself** MTV EP is so unusual. Like nothing else you hear. It's hip-hop, but it's kind of chaotic music and that means the flows are equally chaotic. It's forever shifting and changing. It's busy!

NORMAN BLAKE

Teenage Fanclub's master craftsman.

My pick of last year's releases is *Coral Island* by **The Coral**. I've liked their music since I went to see Gorky's Zygotic Mynci supporting them in Glasgow, 20 years ago. It's one of those rare albums where every song is good, and the narration gives the album a kind of rock opera feel and I'm a sucker for that kind of thing. I really like their sonic palette – close harmonies, in your face organ, and jangly, surfy guitars. James Skelly's voice has a lovely timbre too.

This year I started collecting the *Top Of The Pops* albums – you can pick them up pretty cheaply from charity shops. My favourites are the ones that were made during the punk era. That someone thought it was a good idea to cover Death Disco or Gary Gilmore's Eyes is both mind-boggling and very funny. They made about 150 of these compilations and I have around 25, so I have quite a ways to go before I complete my collection!

STUART BRAITHWAITE

Mogwai's noise-sculptor-in-chief.

I've got three things. The newest **Loscil** album, *Lux Refractions*. He [Scott Morgan, from Vancouver] makes sparse, ambient music. I seem to have been listening to more quiet music than loud for the last little while and this is just really, really beautiful. The latest **Blanck Mass** album, *In Ferneaux*, is a really varied record. There are some ambient passages, but also some field recording – the sounds of different places he's been – and every now and then it kicks into a big techno thing. It's one of his [Benjamin John Power, once of Fuck Buttons] best records. And the songs I've heard from the new **Grouper** album, *Shade* – Unclean Mind and Ode To The Blue – I've really loved. I think her [Liz Harris's] records are getting better and better – very gauzy and minimal and quiet. Her music was used in [HBO's] Mare Of Easttown show that was a hit this year, so hopefully she's infiltrated people's subconscious already. That's the mainstream sell!

Black Metal into the future: Jane Weaver gets her skates on.

JANE WEAVER

Divine diva of Tomorrow's World pop.

Social media constantly bombards us with music so I prefer to find things for myself, things that are more underground. **Dean Blunt** released *Black Metal* in 2014 and this year he released *Black Metal 2*. I don't know much about him, which I like, but he's such an unusual artist, arty but with lots of guitars, a bit retro indie and a bit dream-pop but very modern too. **Richard Dawson & Circle** have just released an album, *Henki*. They're such a good combination – Richard is a cult hero, and I'm romantically drawn to that Scandinavian medieval forest music! **Anika**'s album *Change* is great, it's electronic and melodic, and Krautrocky at times, which ticks all my boxes. I've realised that a lot of other electronic pop I liked this year, such as **Charlotte Adigéry**, leads back to one source, Soulwax's record label Deewee. They have an arty video channel too, with an '80s look that reminds me of Lynn Goldsmith's work. Again, it's retro, but modern.

“The best thing I’ve heard all year!”

LUCY DACUS

Philly’s Star on VHS.

Japanese Breakfast’s *Jubilee* hits in all the ways you would want it to: great songs, arrangements, production, and performances. But what’s extra satisfying about it is watching Michelle [Zauner] fight for joy and win, which is not only refreshing within a genre that has recently been overrun by melancholy, but on a personal level. Following her work from the start – including her beautiful book Crying In H Mart – gives you no choice but to root for her. I think she’s done everyone a favour by showing how loss does not preclude you from happiness.

JJ BURNEL

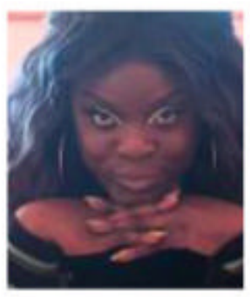
Bass in your face.

I have to say I didn’t listen to much apart from **The Stranglers** this year. Who knows how long we’ve got, y’know, so I wanted to make sure everything we did was top quality. But there’s this Japanese band I really like – **HHR THRILL LOUNGE**. They’re a three-piece – two guys with this amazing female drummer. They’re a bit punky, great musicianship – very exciting! My rediscovery was **Georges Brassens**. He was this existentialist French singer of the ’50s, much loved by the likes of Edith Piaf and Juliette Gréco. His songs are from a different world, more innocent but also a more intellectual one. With his pipe and moustache he was laid-back as fuck.

Sandra Vijandi, Nathan Keay, Sandra Vijandi, Jeff Bierk, Rosie Foster, Eric Welles-Nystro

YOLA

Standing for herself.



The first time I heard Church Girl by **Laura Mvula** I was like, “OK, this is coming into the room like it *owns* the room.” I thought that Whitney Houston was gonna come in or something. But it’s also sonically quite different, like its classic influences are fully metabolised. That woke me up to the album *Pink Noise*. When I heard that, that was incendiary to me. Her voice is great, but she’s so artsy with it, and hooky! She is *insanely* hooky.

Lucy Dacus, she enjoys a Japanese Breakfast.

This year I kept going back to **Minnie Riperton**, speFrom HRcifically *Come To My Garden*. The sonic breadth of this album is astounding, the scope of imagination. It’s somehow super-hip and urbane in its concept, but like, pastoral. She’s got all the range in the world, we know this, but she’s constantly using this vocal ability she has to be as emotive as possible. You can hear her digging in, and then expressing what she’s found. I think she’s one of the geniuses of our time.

And I don’t want to forget **Brandi Carlile**’s Right On Time. When I heard the track, I was like, “I don’t know what you’ve been listening to, I don’t know what you’ve been doing, but your songs are getting weirder and I *love* it.” It’s unabashedly got a bit of Elton in there, for sure, but she’s spent a lot of time with Elton so that’s gonna happen. For real, it feels like a new door has been opened for Brandi.

ANGEL BAT DAWID

Breaking new paths in spiritual jazz…

I have a monthly radio show on NTS so I’m always listening to lots of music and one of the artists I really got into this year is **Qur’an Shaheed**. She’s a vocalist and pianist I got to know through Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra in LA. This was the group [pianist] Horace Tapscott formed in 1961, but the legacy lives on. She’s one of those artists who’s not *just* writing a song. They’re writing about their experiences. And they also want to help people heal. They are the kind of artists that I lovelovelove.

Ben LaMar Gay’s single, Sometimes I Forget How Summer Looks On You, is beautiful. I love the textures. It’s kind of collaging ancient with futuristic. There’s blues and old spirituals in there but fast-forwarded. Wait ’til you hear the album, *Open Arms To Open Us* – it’s amazing.

The last one is **Tomin**. He’s a bass clarinettist and cornet/trumpet player who’s in Brooklyn, and connected to Standing On The Corner, this great jazz collective who were instrumental in producing the last Solange record. His albums on Bandcamp are so beautiful. The new one, *Tominejo, El Chupaflor*, has this wonderful version of one of my favourite songs – Humility In The Light Of The Creator by Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre.

I love Bandcamp by the way; it’s where I get to hear all the great music. You know, I like Spotify, but Bandcamp is where you’ll find, like, this amazing thing by some Australian kid, in his basement, with two spoons! I don’t wanna miss out on that!

JAMES SKELLY

Coral man dives for pearls.

The new **Teenage Fanclub** album, *Endless Arcade*, is probably my favourite of theirs. I can really hear a Gorky’s element since Euros Childs joined them. There’s an ease to the songwriting but a quiet intensity to it, too. It’s not in your face but if you listen, it’s there.

Sierra Ferrell’s *Long Time Coming* is another amazingly good album. She’s kind of country with a jazz twist, and she’s done a lot of playing on the streets in New Orleans. I saw her acoustic sessions on this YouTube channel, Gems On VHS, and I almost prefer those more stripped-back versions. Sometimes you can’t believe the songs aren’t covers, it’s like they’ve existed forever. She’s got a song called Jeremiah that could’ve been one of the best Everly Brothers songs.

My favourite new band is called **The Dream Machine** from New Brighton. They use the same rehearsal room as us. They’re all like, 18, and they just seem to take acid and make Super 8 videos and record songs themselves on an 8-track. To me, that’s all I want from a band. They’ve got a EP called Jesus Babe, and my favourite song is called Days Of Heaven.

CHRISSIE HYNDE

Rock’n’roll animal lover…

I went to see James Walbourne, Kris Sonne and Dave Page play in their band, **His Lordship**, at the Moth Club, Hackney, in September. James plays in The Pretenders with me and Kris Sonne

was the drummer on our *Valve Bone Woe* live shows so it was especially great to see them on-stage as part of an audience. His Lordship is straight-ahead noisy rock'n'roll and reminded me of how much I miss seeing original loud music played by real musicians. Even before Covid I missed seeing bands in small clubs. Stadium rock and big venues leave me cold and always have, so it was very uplifting. Bands are still best.

The other band I dug was at a Julian Assange protest I did with Vivienne Westwood. **We Are One** are this spirited punk outfit from Doncaster, Yorkshire. They were playing on the back of a flatbed truck with little gear so it was acoustic. Acoustic punk. Great stuff.

I just got the new **Bob Dylan** bootleg series box [*Springtime In New York: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 16*]. and I listened to it on the Eurostar the other day. It's the first time I've listened to music while travelling as I usually just read or look out the window. So that was a double new experience for me, listening on headphones and revisiting some great songs – versions I've never heard before. Bob always delivers.

ALAN SPARHAWK

Low's beautiful noisemaker.

I feel there are parts of my brain that have been in a cave for the last year and a half. But I managed to poke out every once in a while and see things that were interesting. I discovered **Divide And Dissolve**, this duo from Melbourne. I'm a big sucker for anything that's coming in pretty bold with some large strokes of dissonance and noise, especially when you can tell it's trying to transcend and reach for something. I remember thinking, "Wow, here's a high-water mark of intensity and intention and commitment." Really inspiring.

On the complete other end of the spectrum was **Tim Heidecker**. He had a song out called Fear Of Death and it's just pure western songwriting: guitar strumming and harmonies and stuff and catchy hooks. And this amazing lyric – "Fear of death is keeping me alive…" – which felt to me like the theme of the pandemic.

My other discovery was **Gazelle Twin**. She [AKA Elizabeth Bernholz] did the music for this film, Nocturne. It's like she's trying to get ahead of all the possibilities of rhythm. And there's a lot of really crazy vocal stuff. It's like, "Oh, *that's* what it sounds like to be unhindered. *That's* what it sounds like when you're brave." Man, you can only hope that you have moments like that.

Our son took up bass and got into all kinds of soul and funk. He's coming to me and going, "Do you know this song?" So after he's gone to bed I'm down here cramming, like, an Isley Brothers tune, so the next day when he's like, "Hey, you want to play?" I can be like, "Of course…" It's been quite an eye-opener!

PAUL WELLER

It's not TBTIHAY without him…

Can I pick a few? Well I'm a big fan of **Villagers** and I always look forward to Conor's records 'cos they're always very different. The new one, *Fever Dreams*, is very textured, very layered. But I think his lyrics, his arrangements and everything are off the charts.

I really like **Sam Fender** and I love his new record [*Seventeen Going Under*]. The track Last To Make It Home is just fucking stunning I think. A great voice, obviously, but I just think his lyrics are brilliant. If you're not sure about him, go back and have a proper listen. He's young, but the lyrics are really deep and detailed.

The **Bobby Gillespie & Jehnny Beth** album, *Utopian Ashes*, was great, too. There's some of that country-soul thing that I know Bobby loves, but also a confessional vibe to it, very soulful, and for me it's Bobby's best ever singing. It sounds so… mature.

Declan O'Rourke's *Arrivals* is an absolutely brilliant record. His voice and guitar-playing are unbelievable, and he's a brilliant storyteller. People have got to hear this album! Also, **Dot Allison**'s *Heart-Shaped Scars* and **Hannah Peel**'s *Fir Wave* – beautiful moods and vibes. And *Coral Island* by **The Coral**! For a reissue, it's got to be **The Beach Boys**' *Feel Flows*. Forever, the Dennis Wilson song? What a tune that is – there's an a cappella version on the box set that's magnificent. And I nearly forgot **Noel Gallagher & The High Flying Birds** [*Back The Way We Came: Vol. 1*]. Ten years of brilliant tunes, man. He's flying!

Interviews by: Martin Aston, Andy Cowan, Danny Eccleston, Lois Wilson

Paul Weller, from young Sam Fender to The Beach Boys.

On your MOJO CD this month

1 ST. VINCENT
…At the Holiday Party
(Annie Clark & Jack Antonoff) Published By: Ducky Donath Songs Administered by Sony/ATV Songs LLC (BMI) / Nail Polish Manifesto Music Administered by Hipgnosis Notes (ASCAP) P) 2021 Loma Vista Recordings. Distributed by Concord.

2 ROBERT PLANT AND ALISON KRAUSS
It Don't Bother Me
(Bert Jansch) Published by Universal Music-Careers obo Heathside Music Ltd. (P) & (C) Under exclusive licence to Warner Music UK Limited. ℗&© Hokker Inc and Trolcharm Limited.

3 BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD
Track X
(Charlie Wayne, Georgia Ellery, Isaac Wood, Lewis Evans, Luke Mark, May Kershaw & Tyler Hyde) Published by: Just Isn't Music ℗&©: Ninja Tune 2021. Taken from the album *For The First Time*.

4 NICK CAVE AND WARREN ELLIS*
White Elephant
(Nick Cave) Published by Kobalt Music Group ℗&© 2021 Goliath Records Ltd. under exclusive licence to AWAL Recordings Ltd. Taken from the album: *Carnage* (Goliath Records Ltd). www.nickcave.com
**Nick Cave and Warren Ellis track has swearing*

5 CHRISSIE HYNDE
Blind Willie McTell
(Bob Dylan) Published by Universal Tunes (SESAC) ℗&© 2021 Chrissie Hynde Under Exclusive Licence To BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. Taken from the album *Standing In The Doorway: Chrissie Hynde Sings Bob Dylan.*

6 VILLAGERS
The First Day
(Conor J O'Brien) Published by Domino Publishing Co. Ltd ℗&© 2021 Domino Recording Co. Ltd Taken from the album: *Fever Dreams* www.wearevillagers.com

7 FLOATING POINTS AND PHAROAH SANDERS
Movement I
(Sam Shepherd) Recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra Published by BMG ℗&© 2021 Luaka Bop. Taken from the album *Promises.*

8 DRY CLEANING
Leafy
(Florence Shaw, Lewis Maynard, Nick Buxton, Tom Dowse) Published by Warp Publishing Taken from the album *New Long Leg* [4AD0254] Licensed courtesy of 4AD Limited By arrangement with Beggars Group Media Limited www.4ad.com

9 YOLA
Dancing Away In Tears
(Yola, Dan Auerbach, Natalie Hemby) ℗&© 2021 Easy Eye Sound, LLC®. Taken from the album *Stand For Myself.*

10 DAVID CROSBY
I Think I
(David Crosby/James Raymond/Steve Postel) Published by Crozsongs/Proudfoot Music/Less Blue Music ℗&©2021 Three Blind Mice Inc Taken from the album *For Free.* www.davidcrosby.com

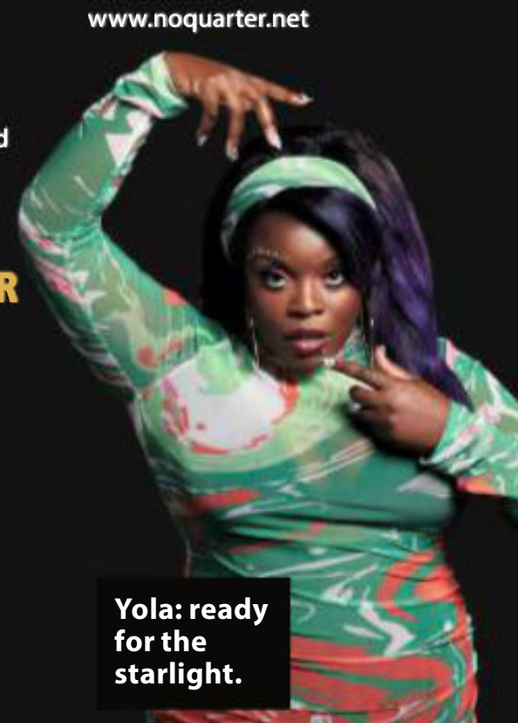
11 THE WEATHER STATION
Parking Lot
(Tamara Lindeman) Published by Alma Road Music Ltd. Taken from the Fat Possum album *Ignorance.*

12 MDOU MOCTAR
Chismiten
(Mahamadou Souleymane, Ahmoudou Madassane, Michael Coltun) Published by Domino Publishing ℗2020 Matador Records. Taken from the album *Afrique Victime* [OLE1614] Licensed courtesy of Matador Records www.matadorrecords.com

13 LOW
Hey
(George Alan Sparhawk/Mimi Parker) Published by: 1238 Music (BMI) administered by Domino Publishing Company of America Inc. ℗&©: 2021 Sub Pop Records Taken from the album: *Hey What*

14 THE CORAL
Faceless Angel
Published by Domino Music Publishing ℗&© 2021 The Coral under exclusive licence to Run On Records in association with Modern Sky UK. Taken from the album: *Coral Island* (Run On Records in association with Modern Sky UK).

15 ENDLESS BOOGIE
Disposable Thumbs
(Harry Druzd, Jesper Eklow, Paul Major) Published by Endless Boogie (BMI / administered by Domino Publishing Company LTD) Taken from the album *Admonitions* www.noquarter.net



Yola: ready for the starlight.

Auteur! Auteur!: Frank Zappa wields the camera, Royal Albert Hall, February 8, 1971; (right) Ringo, with magic lamp, as Zappa in 200 Motels; (far right) movie poster.

MOJO EYEWITNESS

ZAPPA CRASHES AT 200 MOTELS

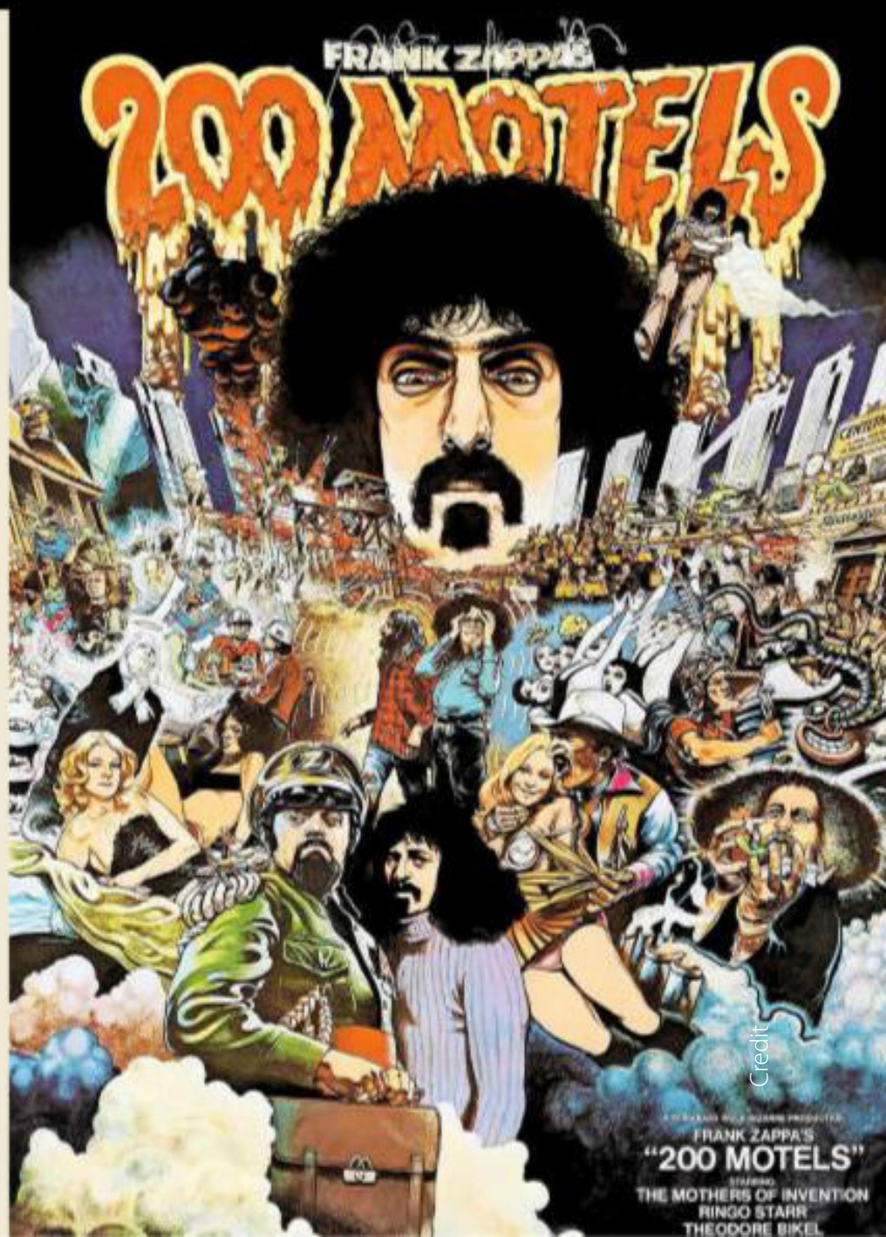
He'd formed a new line-up of the Mothers, experimented with orchestra and rock band, and released 1970's divisive *Chunga's Revenge*. Now FRANK ZAPPA had a new challenge: to create maximum confusion on the movie screen, in one week, on a budget of $679,000. For October '71's absurdist, fx-scrambled pseudo-tour-doc, he'd be joined by Ringo Starr, Keith Moon, the RPO and… Albert Steptoe? "When you go on the road," say principals and band members, "it makes you crazy."

Interviews by **MARTIN ASTON**

Tony Palmer: I'd interviewed Frank Zappa for [1968 documentary] All My Loving. He was the kind of guy I needed to make some sense about pop music, and we saw eye to eye on the state of music, and the world. A while later, his manager Herb Cohen said Frank wanted to make a film. [Mothers record label] MGM would only agree to finance the film if Zappa brought in a director, a safe pair of hands. Enter Muggins.

Frank Zappa: 200 Motels is a mixed media presentation, a combination of a film, an opera, a television show, a rock'n'roll concert. It all tells a story of when you go on the road, it makes you crazy.

TP: The idea of a film about life on the road struck me as potentially intriguing. When we met, Frank produced a trunk containing piles of paper, music manuscripts and random ideas and thoughts, about 300 pages, some handwritten, some paste-ups, some incomprehensible, a few lyrics, and a frequent use of the word penis. He said, "You sort it out." Ah.



Credit Mirrorpix/Getty Images, Alamy (2)

"I THOUGHT WHAT WE WERE DOING WAS BONKERS [BUT] I PASSIONATELY BELIEVED IT DESERVED TO BE SEEN."

Tony Palmer

Pauline Butcher: Frank was always 100 per cent in charge and even took away from Tony, the supposed director, which infuriated Tony. But in the end, it turned out not to be nearly enough money [the budget only covered a week's production, a third of the 'script' was left unshot].

TP: I booked Pinewood for a week, and apart from filming, my job was to impose structure. Of course, Frank wanted control of everything. One idea I had was suggesting someone dress up as Frank, so he wouldn't have to act. He liked the idea, but who did I know? I'd previously worked with Ringo, and of the all the mad things that I could do with a Beatle, why not?

Joe Travers: Frank came to see Ringo at Apple, and brought the musical scores to show him. Ringo said, "I don't know why you're showing me, I can't read music… but because of that, I'll do your film." Ringo appreciated Frank as a true talent, and musically wacky.

PB: It was not Frank who agreed to have Ringo play him in the film, it was Frank's desire, Frank's plan.

TP: Did Frank claim he asked Ringo? It wouldn't surprise me if Frank claimed he got the sun to rise every morning. The problem was there was no real script I could give [the players]. It was as tightly organised as we could be, while allowing for some improvisation. What you often see is the first rehearsal, or at most the second take. The Mothers had never performed a script, so it was always on the edge.

Ian Underwood: The band only heard about 200 Motels once it was in place, and we flew to London. We had a couple of read-throughs and rehearsals with the Royal Philharmonic, not even a week's worth of prep. Of course, it was chaos, but it was also fun.

TP: Frank needed an orchestra. "Your job," he said. The Royal Philharmonic were volunteered, although I failed to mention that they'd be seen throughout the film in a prison camp called The Centreville Recreational Facility with the percussionists dressed as Nazi guards. They were mightily impressed by the fact it was Pinewood, though. As was a brilliant trumpet player and brass band conductor I had come across, Elgar Howarth.

Elgar Howarth: I'd seen Frank Zappa's name but I knew absolutely nothing about rock'n'roll and I'd never heard anything remotely like his music. He was quite affable but it was two different approaches, the collective group of the orchestra, and Frank with his own ideas. [Some players] didn't think much of the music and especially the lyrics, but that's orchestras for you.

Don Preston: Hearing the orchestra and the lead soprano was wonderful. But what she had to sing! Stuff like "Hot broth… with dogs in it", and "tinsel cock." Sorry, Frank, but I didn't think it was well written. We got in the spirit of the film, but a lot was bullshit, a hodge-podge of stuff that didn't connect. Ringo was Frank, but he was playing Larry the Dwarf, who wasn't even a dwarf. There wasn't even a reason not to make sense for a lot of it.

[Unidentified voiceover in the film]: "The reason Larry the Dwarf is doing all this stuff is because it's all part of the score to 200 Motels. Every word, every action. The lamp, the reproductive orifice…"

DP: A lot of the script was things the band had already said, perhaps a little exaggerated by Frank. He'd been taping conversations since the first Mothers' line-up. It was part of the job to me, but [bassist] Jeff Simmons quit over it.

JT: It wasn't Frank taping conversations, but [Mothers vocalist] Mark Volman. I have tapes of Frank and Mark listening to Mark's tapes and dying of laughter. Stuff like, "We don't need Frank, we can start our own band!" I'm sure it was a wide-eyed moment when Jeff realised he had to recite lines that he'd been caught saying, that he was too heavy to be in the group, he'd rather be playing bluesier rock than Frank's comedy music, and The Mothers being run like an army, so he left, which is unfortunate because it was hilarious, and true.

DP: Jeff's part was pretty big. We all sat around, like, what are we going to do? Someone, maybe Frank, suggested Wilfrid Brambell [AKA Albert from Steptoe And Son], who'd played Paul McCartney's uncle in A Hard Day's Night. Who could be further from the part of Jeff? Wilfred was very good in rehearsal but at one point, he said, "Gawd, I can't do this," and he quit too.

Pamela Des Barres: Wilfrid just couldn't even imagine relating to what he had to say, it was so far from anything he'd done before. For Theodore Bikel [esteemed folk singer and Hollywood actor, who played narrator Rance Muhammitz] too, but he hung on in there. Though he did refuse to play one scene with me because he wouldn't let a woman say the 'F' word in front of him. My character, the journalist out to get the naughty rock'n'roll scoop of the century, was supposed to sexually engage a giant doll of Frank, but Theodore also wouldn't say the lines about me rubbing my tits all over the Zappa dummy.

DP: Frank said, "The next person who walks in, plays Jeff." And Martin Likert, Ringo's driver, put his head around the door – does Ringo want any cigarettes? "Grab him!" Not only did Martin turn out to be great, but he played bass and was

Getty (10), Alamy (4), Eyevine

Lights, camera, Zappa! (clockwise from top left) Frank and The Mothers Of Invention outside London's Roundhouse, June 1970 (Jeff Simmons, far right); Wilfrid Brambell; Theodore Bikel; Keith Moon gets to a nunnery; Zappa lines up a shot on set; scene from 200 Motels; Frank and friends protest outside the Royal Albert Hall; opening credits animation by Charles Swenson.

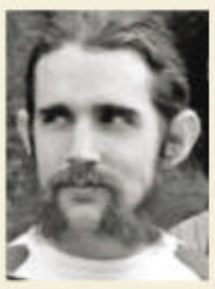
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

● Frank Zappa

● Tony Palmer (co-director of 200 Motels)

● Don Preston (Mothers guitarist/ keyboardist)

● Ruth Underwood (Mothers percussionist)



● Ian Underwood (Mothers saxophonist/ keyboardist)

● Pamela Des Barres (plays 'the Interviewer' in 200 Motels)

● Pauline Butcher (Zappa's PA)

● Joe Travers (Zappa Trust 'Vaultmeister')

able to do the rock parts on-stage. What a godsend!

FZ: Normally in a movie, everyone is mimicking to a playback tape, but there was none of that in 200 Motels. That was a real orchestra playing the real notes, a real rock'n'roll band playing the real notes. It was designed to have a lively happening feel to it, but it's very difficult to get a lively happening feel with a bunch of people like the Royal Philharmonic… they actually attempted to sabotage the show. On the last day of the shoot, we'd rented tuxedos for them, and a lot of the guys had ripped theirs up… the kind of stuff that you'd expect from the worst punk group.

PDB: I especially loved the scene where Keith Moon [as the harp-playing nun] crawled through the orchestra as they were playing, who had no idea that would happen. Frank would often pull surprises like that.

DP: At the end, Theodore Bikel got up on a pedestal and said, "Ladies and gentleman, I want to tell you that this experience was the worst of anything I've made in my entire life," and left.

TP: Did I say it was the worst film I had ever made? If I did, it would have been a joke. I was asked once, compared to my Italia-prize winning films or All My Loving, where do you rate 200 Motels? I smiled and said, "It's different." It's not like worshipping The Rolling Stones, like Martin Scorsese with 40 cameras showing how marvellous he is, and by the way, here's the band.

JT: I think the film is hilarious, and a little avant-garde glimpse into the world of Frank Zappa in the early '70s. What impresses me most is how they actually got done in such a short period of time. Without the luxury of doing what they intended with more money and time, Frank had to jumble things around and it feels very disjointed, but ultimately his point does come across.

TP: I kept reading that I threatened to burn the negatives, which really pissed me off.

JT: You'll hear it for yourself on the box set. Tony says if Frank interferes with the editing, he'll take a magnet and ruin all the tapes. Ultimately, it's Frank Zappa's film, and according to Tony Palmer, it's his film.

DP: Tony Palmer eventually threw up his hands, saying I can't work with his guy. Frank was even editing the film whilst they were shooting. He had his fingers on buttons across cameras one to four, pushing them so fast.

Ruth Underwood: It was typical Frank. He was so meticulous, planning every note of music, but he could be impulsive too with the tools at hand. But I was shocked because Frank was extraordinarily professional on set, trying to get along with everyone, and never saw him lose it or be an asshole.

PDB: I never looked to anyone but Frank on set, and neither did anyone else. I don't even remember Tony Palmer.

TP: 200 Motels is Frank's creation and I helped him bring it to life. But if we had such a bad relationship, why did Frank call me as an expert witness when he sued the Royal Albert Hall when they cancelled the 200 Motels concert? [a spokesman called the film, "Filth for filth's sake"; Zappa lost the 1975 case]. Though I thought what we were doing was bonkers, I passionately believed it deserved to be seen. MGM clearly didn't think that. Frank was furious too that MGM never distributed it properly, and they still won't do anything with the film.

IU: I didn't love 200 Motels, just some of the ideas and the music, because Frank was such a gifted composer. But rewatching it now, it's jam-packed with detail, and if you don't measure it against other films and take it for what it is, it gets a lot more interesting.

RU: After 200 Motels got made, I wasn't interested in watching it because I was shackled to the disappointment Frank experienced during the shoot. But I just watched it again and I was blown away in a way I wasn't 50 years ago, just the vision of what Frank tried to accommodate on a shoestring budget and how uniquely fresh it all is. Fifty years after I was there on set, it's like I finally experienced the movie for the first time. Ⓜ

Frank Zappa quotes from 200 Motels press release, 1971, and The True Story Of 200 Motels documentary, 1988.
The 200 Motels soundtrack 50th anniversary edition is available now on Zappa Records. A revised edition of Pauline Butcher's book Freak Out: My Life With Frank Zappa is published by Plexus.

I CAN'T QUIT YOU

Ghosts in the machine: The Rolling Stones play on in honour of Charlie Watts (from left) Ronnie Wood, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Nissan Stadium, Nashville, October 9, 2021.

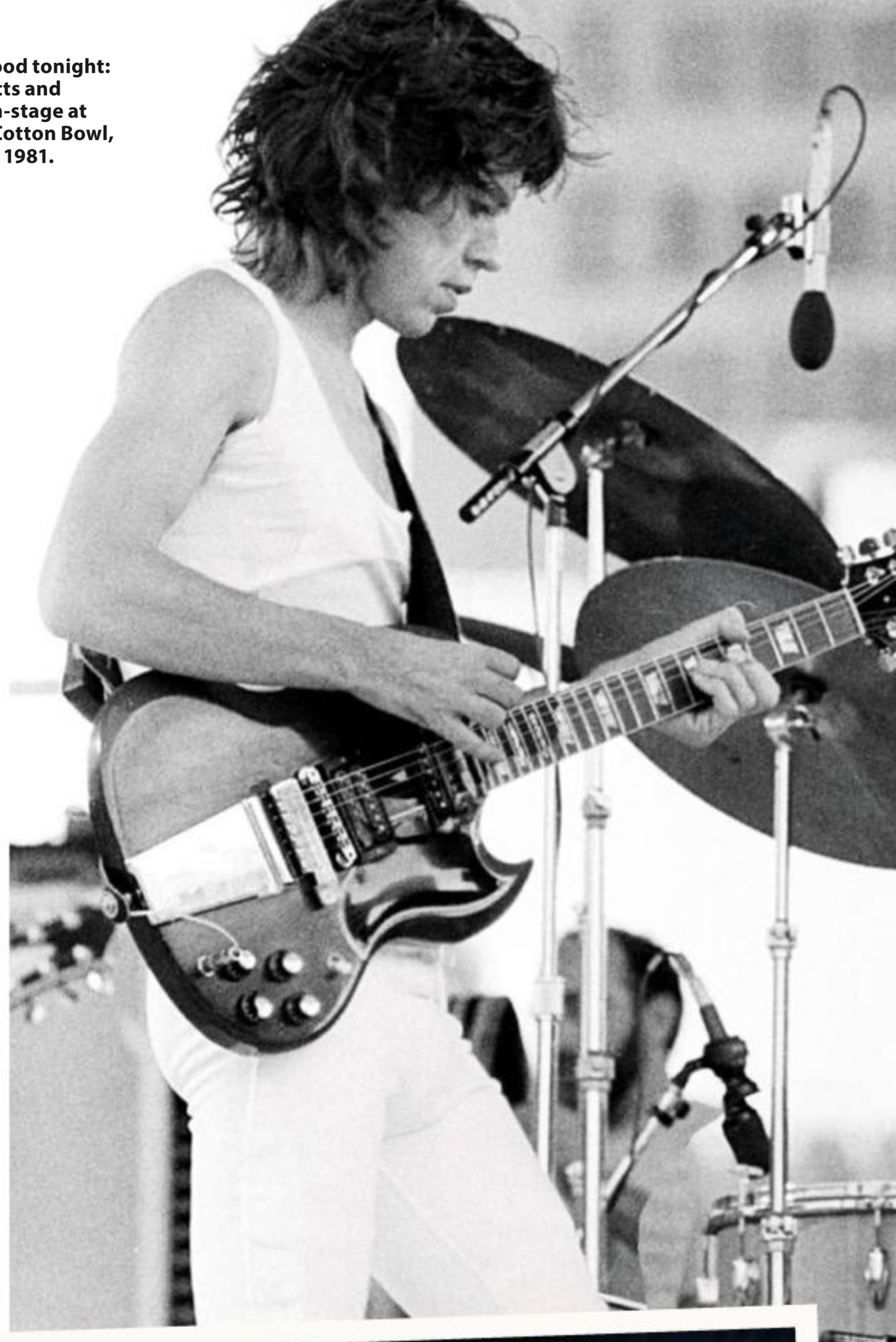
BABY

The death of Charlie Watts rocked us all in 2021. But, torn and frayed, his improbably durable band roll on. MOJO joins them in the American South to marvel at their nerve, verve and merch. But is this latest chapter of their True Adventures their last, and if so, how will the faithful cope? "*This is The Rolling Stones*," they tell GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN. "Everything else is just music."

Getty (4)

PLUS: The Charlie Factor

by MICK JAGGER, KEITH RICHARDS, GLYN JOHNS and CHRIS KIMSEY.



Charlie's good tonight: Jagger, Watts and Richards on-stage at the Dallas Cotton Bowl, Halloween, 1981.

THE PANIC SETS IN AFTER JUST 27 minutes. At 5.30pm, on a balmy early-autumn Thursday in Charlotte, North Carolina, the gates to the city's massive football stadium were scheduled to swing open, ushering in the most eager of the 40,000 fans with tickets to see The Rolling Stones. Lines began forming soon after noon, slowly snaking away from rows of steel barricades and metal detectors at every entrance. The muster feels electrified, festooned in Hot Lips baseball jerseys and vintage tour shirts so threadbare they suggest the Shroud of Turin rather than *Some Girls*.

A string of Stones staples – the peppier ones, including Start Me Up and Jumpin' Jack Flash – blare from gigantic speakers flanking one of several trailers stuffed with posters, socks, bandanas, earrings, and 16 different shirts. Locals clamour for the $90 option, a "limited-edition, event-specific" T-shirt with the tongue juxtaposed against the city's skyline.

"*This is The Rolling Stones*," a father near the front of the line proclaims, here with his son to see the band for the 58th time. "Everything else is just music."

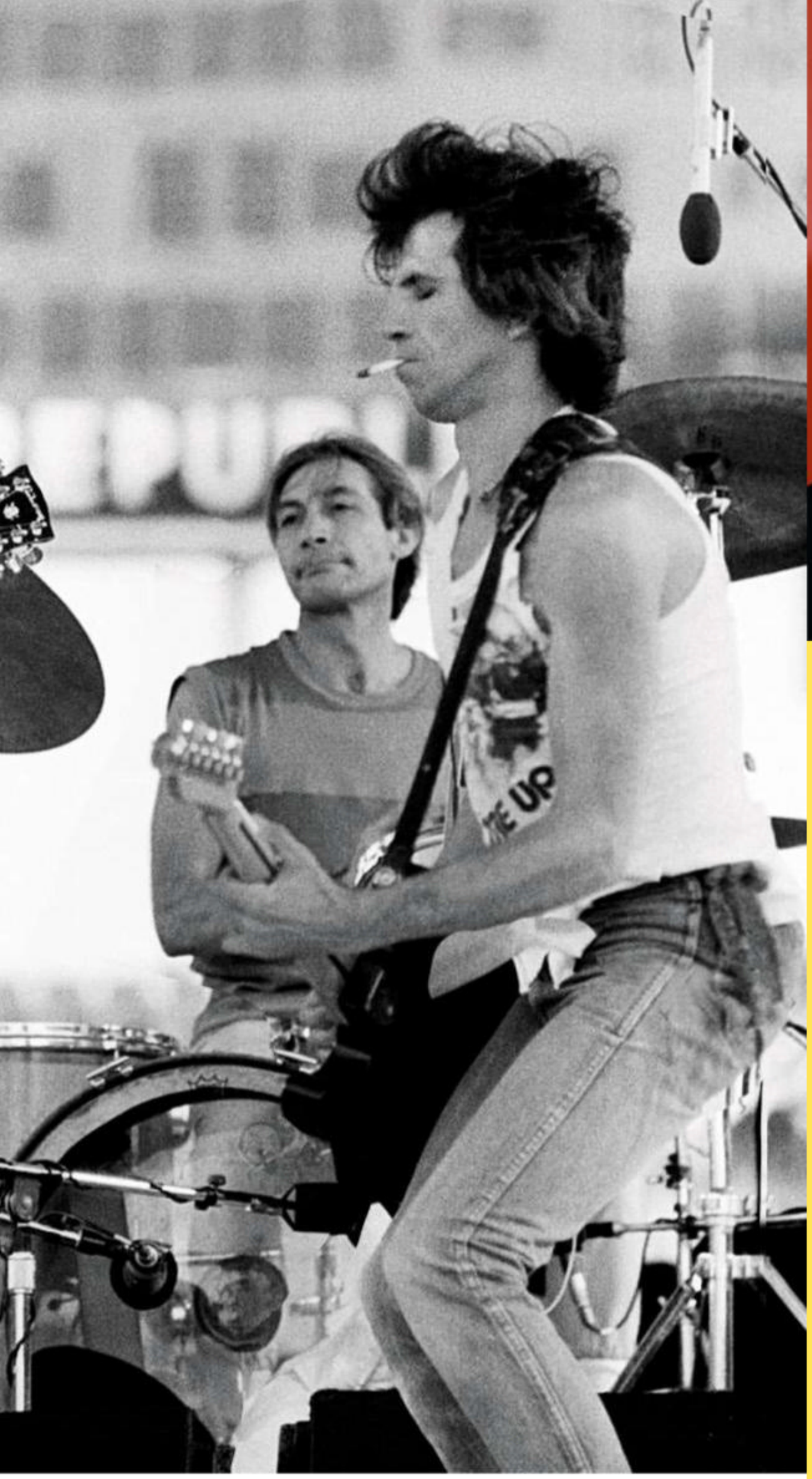
But at 5.57pm, the mood suddenly stiffens. Everyone in line *should* be inside by now, they commiserate, beginning the two-hour wait for the night's opening act, soulful Pittsburgh blues-rockers Ghost Hounds. Even the line to pick up tickets from a will-call window is held back by metal barriers. Platoons of blue-shirted security guards and local cops nervously chit-chat in headsets or mill about in circles. Every 30 seconds, another hopeful fan strolls up to ask when they can enter. Security officers shrug. "Something more serious *has* to be going on," a woman with close-cropped hair and glasses near the front of one line finally proclaims, glancing at those around her for reassurance that never arrives. "Something *must* be wrong."

The line, still lengthening, is quiet and restless. A lone drummer, pounding away in a nearby highway underpass, scores the anxiety. Everyone wants him to stop. Then, at 6.02pm, the guards nod. The gates swing open. The fans race through security and onward to any of a dozen ticket windows or through a tunnel to their waiting seats.

The worrywart smiles in a sunbeam, but her nerves were not altogether unwarranted. After all, many fans have held tonight's tickets for two years.

Play with fire: Steve Jordan (centre) brings the licks, Bank Of America Stadium, Charlotte, September

INDEED, BEFORE TONIGHT, THE ROLLING STONES have played exactly one public show since August 30, 2019. Unbeknownst to anyone, that 2019 Miami Gardens gig was their final stand with Charlie Watts, the band's drummer since 1963. Yet, much as they always have, both after the death of Brian Jones in 1969 and Jagger's girlfriend L'Wren Scott in 2014, the Stones pressed on. The mortal stakes, however, are different now. Mick



Jagger has a new heart valve. Ronnie Wood was again diagnosed with cancer in April. Keith Richards quips about playing the next tour in a wheelchair. Watts is no longer with us. The woman in line never dared to utter such sacrilege, but she was wondering if The Rolling Stones were late because, well, another Rolling Stone had died.

What was once the world's most dangerous rock band has improbably become its longest-running rock band, a relic in motion. Still, they are not immortal. The Rolling Stones have talked about "final tours" for 40 years, but Watts's departure is a reminder that the final decision may not be theirs. Could this two-month romp through the football stadiums of the States be the end?

In the moment, at least, such speculation feels like misapprehension. Three hours after our line began moving, the band bounds to the stage – as wide as a football field, as tall as an office building, as bright as a Las Vegas night – a minute early, cutting instantly into Street Fighting Man. Encore break and wardrobe swaps excepted, they do not leave for the next 132 minutes, when Richards, Jagger, and Wood lock arms for a final wave beneath towering projections of Watts, grinning from above with arms folded in tacit approval. All night, they are preternaturally youthful, smiling and winking ➢

Getty (3)

Come on: Keith Richards and Charlie 'Mr Style' Watts, London, June 1963.

"Steve's Very Respectful Of Charlie"

Before resuming their No Filter tour, the Stones shared some thoughts – on Charlie, his replacement Steve Jordan, and the future – with MOJO's DAVID FRICKE.

Mick: "[Steve Jordan]'s very respectful of Charlie. He played with Keith before we started the rehearsals, and then he did homework, listening to the tunes. When we talk about what Charlie did on this one, we listen to the original record, and then we listen to the live versions. There's certain licks that we want to do, that Charlie did."

Keith: "Steve brings with him a lot of knowledge about the Stones. He'll say, 'No, Charlie plays like *this*.' Steve is so meticulous, so aware of the seat he's sitting in. Steve said this to me: 'Charlie *played* the drums. He didn't hit them.'"

Mick: "We played with rock drummers before. We played with Carlo Little, who used to play with Screaming Lord Sutch's band. He had two bass drums – it sounded great. But it wasn't Charlie. Charlie brought another sensibility, the jazz touch. And he didn't play very heavy. Sometimes, if I got him mad enough, he would. That was the only way I could get him to play really heavy – to get him mad."

Keith: "Charlie was fascinated by the Chicago drummers – [Jimmy Reed's drummer] Earl Phillips; Fred Below and Francis Clay [at Chess Records]. To him, they were jazz players, not rock'n'roll, which of course they weren't either. Somehow Charlie crossed that fine line. Charlie could make it roll and most drummers have never been able to do that."

Mick: "Charlie gave a swing to the band – the swerve and subtlety. And he could also be straight-ahead when you wanted to be. Get Off Of My Cloud – there's nothing particularly subtle about that drumming. He could do that. He was in the pocket."

Keith: "The thing Charlie and I had from day one was we would cringe at the crassness of showbiz and its demands. Charlie would run a mile rather than do a promo. In a way, the difference between Charlie Watts on-stage and the person is in the way he dressed: on-stage, T-shirt, a pair of leisure pants and a pair of Capezios. That's it. Whereas in real life, private life, Charlie was Mr Style, man. His joy was to go to Savile Row and have these suits made. It was his playground. His tailor could tell you more about him than I could."

Mick: "We had a lot of wonderful times apart from playing music together. We used to go and watch cricket. And when we'd get together, we didn't talk about music. We talked about art, which he knew a lot more about than I did."

> "Charlie Watts was my bed. I never doubted it. I never even thought about it. Only now am I thinking about it."
>
> **KEITH**

Keith: "Charlie Watts was my bed. I could lay on there, and I know that not only would I have a good sleep, but I'd wake up and it'd still be rocking. It was something I've had since I was 19. I never doubted it. I never even thought about it. Only now am I thinking about it."

Keith: "Steve and [bassist] Daryl Jones working together is another thing. From a musical point of view, it's incredibly energetic and wonderfully inspiring. I was like, 'I can't pick this up. I don't care who it is. I can't pick this up without Charlie.' But once Steve and I got into it, 'Hey, this is the way it's supposed to be.'"

Mick: "[Could this be the last tour?] I don't know. I mean, anything could happen. You know, if things are good next year and everyone's feeling good about touring, I'm sure we'll do shows. I'm just trying to concentrate on this tour now."

◅ and dancing for a sea of cell-phone screens. When they play what Jagger calls "our lockdown song", the slinky Living In A Ghost Town, for only the second time, they seem recharged, not burdened.

From Steve Jordan's thunderous drums to Chuck Leavell's dramatic piano, the band sounds unimpeachable. In Jordan's hands, Watts's finesse and lightness has been replaced by an undeniable power, the band's once-riverine sense of swing now moving with tidal strength. Jordan is loud, sweaty, and beaming. The band seems invigorated by this might: Jagger bounces from one end of the stage to the other like an electron and sprints down a long catwalk as if in training for the Olympics. In a skintight red shirt, Wood sometimes joins him, prowling stage right as the singer saunters to the left.

Beneath a yellow hat and bejewelled by an armoury of chains and rings, Richards commandeers the set's middle for two songs. He is worn but warm, occasionally reaching down to strum as he eases through Slipping Away. "It's good to be here," he says before starting. "It's good to be *anywhere*."

The stadium lets out a collective chuckle, joining in the joke of someone who has evaded mortality for six decades of wild living as a Rolling Stone. But it is a knowingly nervous laugh, a laughter that accepts the punchline will someday soon – perhaps today, it felt for a moment – run out.

IT'S APT, IN A WAY, THAT THE STONES ARE BEGINNING another phase, the post-Charlie Era, here. The band would not exist without American music – with all the complications the phrase entails.

They nabbed their name, after all, from a song by Muddy Waters, the blues giant raised in a shack on a Mississippi cotton plantation only a half-century after the Civil War ended. Their earliest work re-trod Willie Dixon and Bo Diddley, Holland-Dozier-Holland and Chuck Berry. During the decades that followed, their sound spooled into and out of the blues, but they never forsook nor escaped those fundamentals, even at their most outlandish. Just two weeks into this Stones tour leg, Paul McCartney took to the New Yorker magazine to chastise them as "a blues cover band".

But the Stones-and-States connection has always been about more than genre and influence, less unilateral pilfering than back-and-forth exchange. Their 1964 arrival in New York four months after The Beatles not only affirmed the British Invasion but also loosened its collar, sharpened its edge. Dean Martin mocked them repeatedly when they played his programme in 1964, suggesting they were hardened criminals. The band's first colour appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show two years later felt like pure contraband.

While they ended one era with their reckless disaster at Altamont in 1969, their 1972 US return helped usher in a new era of rock'n'roll superstardom. Rolling Stone sent Truman Capote to tail them. They played football stadiums, The Forum, and four shows at Madison Square Garden. "The Rolling Stones tour party moves across the nation like the League in Hesse's The Journey To The East," wrote Robert Greenfield. "The limousines are ready at any hour to whisk the entire party to private hangars where the chartered plane is ready to take off."

Through the '70s, '80s and beyond, ever-escalating scale would become The Rolling Stones' most crucially American feature. For Steel Wheels, they spent $40 million on a stage surrounded by mammoth dinosaurs, ghouls, and girls. For the Voodoo Lounge run, they built a gargantuan lamppost-cobra chimera that spat fire. These ridiculous theatrics seem readymade for the States, and many of these tours shattered all-time sales records, proving the Stones were able to do what so few of their British peers, Beatles included, could: survive, advance, and expand always, an all-American ethos.

In Charlotte, lots of fans sported T-shirts where Hot Lips had been redrawn to look like an American flag, a British smile of Stars and Stripes. No one gave it a second thought.

THE ROLLING STONES' HISTORY WITH Charlotte is nearly as long as the band's relationship with the United States itself. They first visited, Jagger reminds the crowd midway through the set, in November 1965, with Satisfaction racing up the charts. They played the Charlotte Coliseum with Patti LaBelle's Blue Belles for $2.50 per ticket. Seven years later, after Altamont and *Exile On Main St.*, they were back at the Coliseum on the notorious "Stones Touring Party". In 1965, they were fresh-faced, novel; in 1972 they looked like stars, a dangerous temptation for the country's Bible Belt. Jagger pranced in a mauve leotard and jean jacket. A cross dangled above Richards' bare chest. Bill Wyman scowled behind a Plexiglass bass.

Charlotte in 2021, though, has almost nothing to do with the sexy, sneering Rolling Stones of yore, but a lot to do with what they are now. More than two centuries ago, Charlotte became the site of the United States' first commercial gold mine. After a recent tussle with San Francisco, it is now the

"I Think It Is An Era Passing"

GLYN JOHNS – who worked with Charlie Watts on the Stones' greatest LPs – salutes an uncomplicated genius.

"MY FIRST impressions of Charlie Watts? He was just the loveliest bloke. He was totally uncomplicated and obviously lived to play. Equally, he never changed from the day I met him to the last time I saw him. He was totally unaffected by the success of the Stones, in his personality or in his attitude to other people.

In the studio, he was as reliable as any musician I've ever worked with. Always on time, in fact always early. Never rattled by anything. On the drums, simplicity was the key. He started out with four drums in his kit: two toms, snare drum and a bass drum. I'm pretty sure that's exactly what he ended up with 60 years later.

It's hard to talk about 'feel' – it's indescribable really – but I think the combination of him and Bill Wyman was extraordinary and the minute Bill left it wasn't the same. It's the same as when Stew [Ian Stewart] played keyboards with them, they swung more. And Bill, I think, was incredibly underrated. Never really appreciated by Mick and Keith – not to the extent he should have been.

Charlie and me spent a huge amount of time together… usually waiting for Keith. And sometimes I'd persuade him to play on something else I was producing. There was a Ben Sidran track [The Blues In England, off *Feel Your Groove*, 1971] and *Rough Mix*, the album I did with Pete Townshend and Ronnie Lane. And he did Howlin' Wolf's *London Sessions* [1971]. He came at my request because Ringo had been booked by the guy who was producing it [Norman Dayron]. First day, Ringo says to me, 'Why am I here?' and I said, 'Well, I don't know, the bloke rang you and you said yes?' He said, 'Can you get me out of it?' So, I got Charlie and Bill, 'cos Klaus Voormann was the bass player the bloke had booked. Can you imagine? Ringo and Klaus… two unbelievable musicians but they wouldn't know the blues if they fell over them.

Can I imagine the Stones without Charlie? No, but I couldn't imagine them without Bill Wyman either. The long and the short of it is simple. If Mick and Keith want to go on the road with other musicians, and people want to go and hear them, they will. But Charlie… I'm sure if you speak to any current or more recent successful drummer in a big rock'n'roll band, they all have Charlie Watts as their favourite drummer. Yet none of them have emulated him in any way. They can't or won't swing like he did. It's sad, but everything changes.

Charlie's finest moment? Well, I always remember Honky Tonk Women, 'cos it starts with him playing. But again, it's so simple. He didn't get clever or try and put a fancy fill in. He just plays the bloody time, and it works."

As told to Danny Eccleston

"Can I imagine the Stones without Charlie? No, but I couldn't imagine them without Bill Wyman either."
GLYN JOHNS

Extraordinary combo: (from left) Brian Jones, Bill Wyman, Watts, Jagger, Richards, October 1964.

Getty (2)

Satisfaction guaranteed: during 1975's Tour Of The Americas (from left) percussionist Ollie Brown, Watts, Jagger, Richards; (inset) poster for 1965's Charlotte Coliseum show.

"IT WAS VERY HEAVY WHEN CHARLIE DIED, BUT IT'S NOT REALLY ONE PERSON. IT'S THE ENERGY THEY BRING THAT'S THE ROLLING STONES."

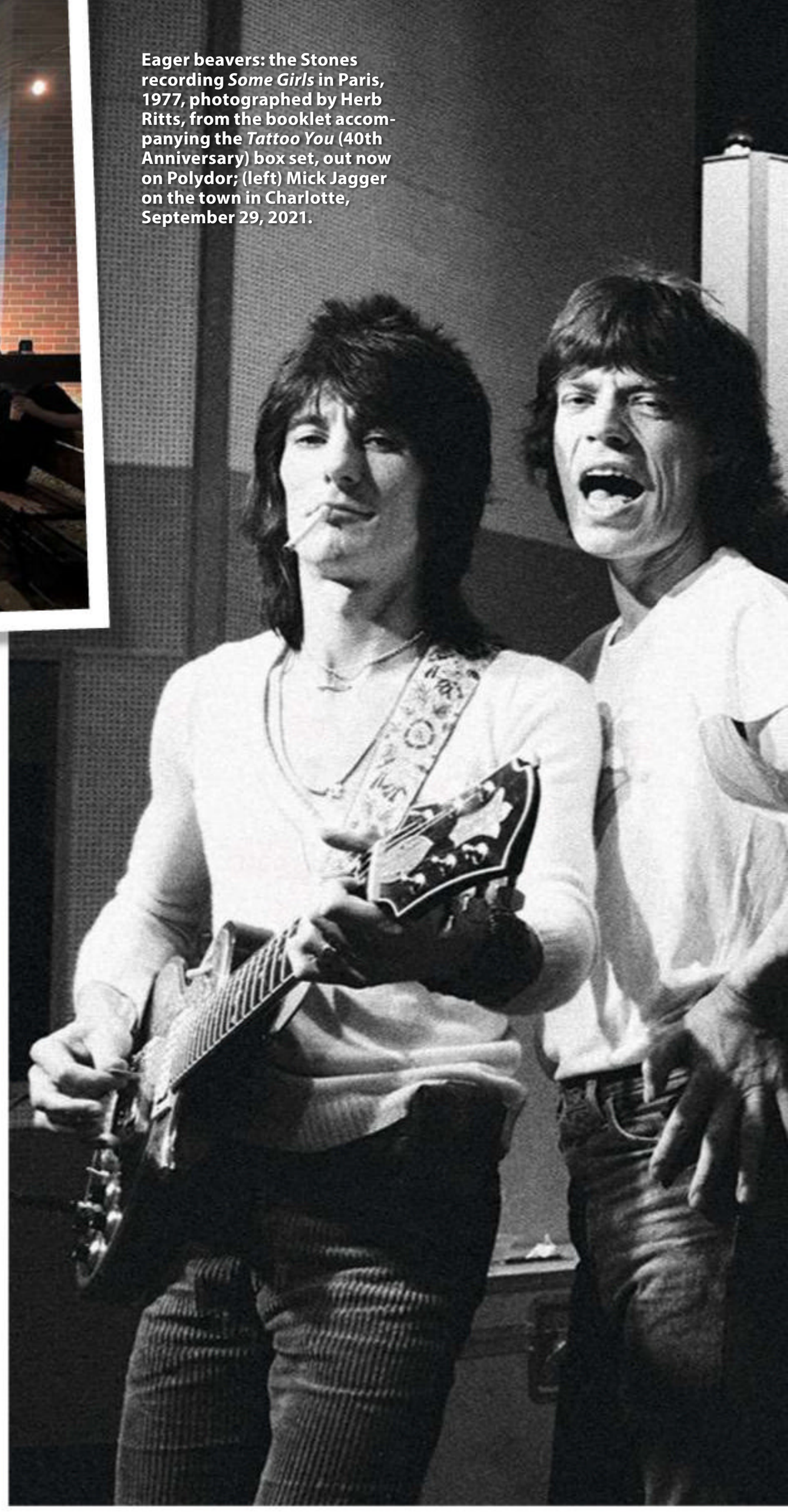
Stones Fan Michael Diruscio

country's second-largest financial hub (behind only New York City), not to mention its outsized insurance and energy holdings.

The city was important in the rise of bluegrass, country, and even the blues. James Brown essentially birthed funk when he cut Papa's Got A Brand New Bag here in 1965, *en route* to the next tour date. But these days, Charlotte can claim neither to rock nor roll. The venue the Stones play tonight – the fastidiously clean Bank Of America Stadium – is the home of the Carolina Panthers NFL team, and although it's only their second show in Charlotte since 1972, Jagger is ready with local colour. "Keep Pounding," he tells us (it's the Panthers' motto), and aims a swipe at pimento cheese, a regional staple.

And then there's the now-international saga of the local saloon. The night before the concert, Jagger left his hotel to visit the Thirsty Beaver, a beloved honky-tonk dive in a zone of the city that is rapidly gentrifying. Several years ago, a local developer tried to buy the Beaver; when the landowner refused, multilevel apartments rose around the squat brick bar like mushrooms, so close on one side the buildings nearly touch. The Beaver looks now like an inverted middle finger to some developer's version of progress. "We wanted a place where people didn't have to dress up, where people could just be who they are," says co-owner Brian Wilson, as he strolls around the Beaver's postage-stamp patio in a Waylon Jennings shirt. "I guess there's an anti-banking movement here," he continues, "or anti- the environment of what Charlotte is trying to become."

Low-key in a black cap and jacket but certainly not camouflaged, Jagger bought a beer at the Beaver's slim bar and quietly drank it. No one noticed he had been here until the next morning, when he tweeted a photo of his patio perch. The image – Mick Jagger, drinking alone and anonymously, the other customers locked in their own conversations – went viral. Jagger doubled down on the excursion on-stage. "I went and saw a little bit of Charlotte last night. A little bit, not too much – you know, early night for the show," Jagger told the crowd after playing Honky Tonk Women. "Had a beer at the Thirsty Beaver, and saw a few banker bros." ➢



Eager beavers: the Stones recording *Some Girls* in Paris, 1977, photographed by Herb Ritts, from the booklet accompanying the *Tattoo You* (40th Anniversary) box set, out now on Polydor; (left) Mick Jagger on the town in Charlotte, September 29, 2021.

THE IRONY, OF COURSE, IS THAT THE NO FILTER Tour is partially a giant advertisement *for* banking – namely, the kind of banking that its fanbase will need sooner rather than later, if they don't already. In 2019, the Alliance for Lifetime Income, a nonprofit that encourages ageing workers to save and invest for retirement, signed on as the lone sponsor of the tour's two US legs. The band's fans, an executive told The New York Times in 2019, are the group's "target demographic: 45- to 72-year-olds with investable assets between $75,000 and $2 million."

Outside each show, the organisation hosts the Alliance Airstream Exhibit, where exuberant young professionals in Stones swag entice fans to spin a wheel for a trivia question (the answer is almost always B) or toss a bouncing ball into any of three rings (almost impossible). Winners get T-shirts with Hot Lips on the front and rows of fiscal sponsors on the back. Losers get a handkerchief or a koozie for keeping beer cold. Diehards sporting multiple layers of Stones apparel answer the trivia questions as though being quizzed by St Peter.

Annuities, though, are about making the ride longer and smoother. So standing here amid assorted carnival games, no one really wants to ponder mortality – that is, the inevitability that one day The Rolling Stones will end. Fans may sport T-shirts painted with Watts's face, and there's even the occasional Brian Jones tribute. Just don't ask about Jagger or Richards. "It was very heavy when Charlie died, but it's not really one person," says Michael DiRuscio, a 49-year-old who plans his vacations around The Rolling Stones and left Philadelphia for Charlotte this morning at 3.30am. "It's the energy they bring that's The Rolling Stones."

Likewise, one couple insists that The Rolling Stones are not a band but instead a spirit, undaunted by human realities like life and death. A fan who drove north from Atlanta for tonight's show confesses, "After this tour, it should be done." He immediately retracts the opinion because of the implication – for The Rolling Stones to end, at least one more member has to die. He won't clarify if that's Jagger or Richards; it's all too much to consider.

"I WENT AND SAW A LITTLE BIT OF CHARLOTTE LAST NIGHT. HAD A BEER AT THE THIRSTY BEAVER, AND SAW A FEW BANKER BROS." *Mick Jagger*

Back at the Alliance Airstream Exhibit, a dapper man with tousled white hair steps up for his trivia. Speaking into a headset microphone though he's only two feet away, the host asks, "What Stones song begins, 'Oh, what a drag it is getting old?'" Puzzled, he looks around for help but chooses something other than Mother's Little Helper, anyway. She hands him a coupon, valid for a free Rolling Stones bandana emblazoned with the logos of two-dozen of the country's biggest banks and insurance companies.

On his way to retrieve it, he pauses to pose with two towering plastic Hot Lips re-creations. "This is what an annuity can do," reads the yellow text on each red tongue. "Immortalise your concert experience at the Rock 'N' Roll Imagemaker," proclaims a nearby sign. A photographer tells him to smile, so he obliges – immortal for now, it seems, just like The Rolling Stones.

THE FIRST TIME KURT WAGNER SAW THE STONES, THE spectacle felt anything but safe, stable, or immortal. When the Nashville native and Lambchop founder was 12, a neighbour who worked at the city's Municipal Auditorium handed Wagner and his older brother, Peter, two tickets to the band's late June stop in Nashville, near the midway point of 1972's Stones Touring Party.

Wagner was already a pre-teen rock'n'roll acolyte who understood how important the moment was – the Stones were back ➢

Capital Pictures, Herb Ritts

"I Tried To Get Him Evicted From Olympic!"

CHRIS KIMSEY survived his first day to work on myriad sessions with Charlie Watts. His secret? "He was always ready."

"THE FIRST TIME I met Charlie Watts I tried to get him evicted. I was at Olympic Studios and one of my first evening sessions as a tape op was with Glyn Johns on *Sticky Fingers*. I turned up at seven o'clock, not knowing that Stones sessions never started on time. At 8.30, I was alone in the control room when two figures walked into the studio. I wasn't into the Stones and R&B – my background was film music – so I thought, Who the hell are these two? I called security, it turned out it was Charlie and Bill Wyman.

I got to know the Stones, and they later asked me to go to Paris and engineer *Some Girls*. Charlie would arrive at the studio, take off his jacket and hang it up. If there wasn't a hanger, he'd fold it neatly. He was always a dapper dresser and had more shoes than his wife Shirley. He took me hat shopping on the Champs-Élysées and bought himself some luggage – a walk-in wardrobe – from Louis Vuitton.

It was the same, every session we did. Charlie would sit down at his kit and, apart from going to the toilet, wouldn't move from that area until we were finished, 10, 12 hours later. He was always ready in case something started with Keith.

Charlie would listen and follow and create a groove, and was never told what to play. I also discovered he never played the hi-hat and the snare at the same time, which is why his drums sounded so good.

One day I was at the studio before anyone else, and started playing his drums. I tweaked the snare – just a half-turn on two nuts. When Charlie sat down at the kit, his stick hit the skin and he stopped dead, as if someone had run out in front of him in a car. He said, 'Someone's touched my kit.' He wasn't angry, he just *knew*.

There's a song on *Steel Wheels* called Continental Drift, and Mick wanted to overdub his drums. Charlie hated overdubbing – so anti-Charlie – but he did it, and it was horrible to see him go through that. In all the years I was with them, he rarely went into the control room and listened back to anything. He never wanted to get in on the action. He was just Charlie – and he was a dream to work with."

As told to Mark Blake

"Charlie's stick hit the skin and he stopped dead, as if someone had run out in front of him in a car. He said, 'Someone's touched my kit.'"

CHRIS KIMSEY

Tennessee titans: Nashville Stones fans ready to roll at Nissan Stadium, October 9.

➢ in the US after Altamont, now bigger and badder than before. From his perch, he could peer backstage and see Stevie Wonder before his opening set and the Stones' coterie of hangers-on. The experience felt thrilling and illicit, a galvanising moment for someone still two decades away from making Lambchop an anchor of Nashville's fringe. He was a kid with long hair in a town where that would get a bottle thrown your way, too; the Stones felt like rebellious allies, cool spokespeople of the cultural vanguard.

"Nashville was a hick town with some music shit – a recording scene, publishing, the Grand Ole Opry. But there were very few places to play, so Nashville would be skipped by big bands," remembers Wagner. "This was like the circus coming to town, and it was all so seductive to me. There was danger in the air."

Nashville, though, is no longer some hick backwater. Its population has ballooned, as has its reputation as both a music-industry bastion and an American party hotspot. There are now office towers for record labels and music publishers, museums for Johnny Cash and George Jones, guided tours of studios and venues. These modern strains of Nashville intersect on Broadway, a long strip of long-standing honky-tonks and glittering new clubs where every weekend feels a little like New Year's Eve. Modern country stars Jason Aldean and Dierks Bentley have massive bars there, as do Kid Rock and Jimmy Buffett. They are absurd outgrowths of the superstardom economy, a system The Rolling Stones helped jumpstart.

Just 10 days after their show in Charlotte (and now with a Pittsburgh performance under their belt), the Stones arrive at Nashville's Nissan Stadium for a sold-out Saturday night. They have the same élan as they did in Charlotte and nearly an identical setlist, adding a ramshackle rendition of Dead Flowers for a crowd that knows its country. Jagger has more local humour and shiny jackets. They honour Watts just as they did before, while Richards makes the same quip about being happy to be anywhere before playing Connection for the first time since 2006.

The crowd's energy, though, is wan, despite the weekend audience of nearly 50,000. Upstairs in an alcove reserved for those with VIP stickers, all the windows are shut so that the Ghost Hounds cannot be heard; when someone opens one to listen, a nearby woman holding a wine glass scowls. The crowd seems to laugh a little bit less at Jagger's jokes and drifts into clear boredom during the less familiar songs, especially Living In A Ghost Town. When Jagger introduces Richards, even the customary crowd chant – "Keef! Keef! Keef!" – is muted.

After the concert ends, the throng splinters toward the assorted sides of the city. So many people flood the Korean Veterans Memorial Bridge above a curve in the Cumberland River that it stops traffic. Many of them turn right, bound for Broadway and another party, if they can find it. Wagner, meanwhile, was back home, imagining how good it must have felt when they closed with Satisfaction. They didn't play it in Nashville in 1972, the only time he saw them, long before the gimmicks became too much. This would have been the time to hear it.

BACK IN CHARLOTTE, THE ROLLING STONES END their show with the highest drama and simplest thrill. During Gimme Shelter, Jagger chases backing singer Sasha Allen down the catwalk. When they reach the end, they twist and writhe like jilted lovers during a last stand. The crowd is rapt, as if watching a soap opera. Just as the cheering ends, the Stones crank into Satisfaction, their live capstone. It is snarling and coiled, as wild as a rabid animal after a half-century. Richards and Wood square off at centre stage as Jagger bounds down the runway once more in a tiny yellow jacket. A spotlight festoons him with a halo. Fireworks explode when he returns, washing over the sides of the stadium in brilliant red streaks. They wave, hug, bow, and leave.

The instant they exit, the stadium's wreath of ultra-intense lightbulbs flashes on and the phalanx of security guards who have been fending off well-wishers from the stage all night wave their arms toward the back of the stadium. The crowd slowly squeezes into walkways, disappearing toward a bar or a bed.

Just then, a new crowd arrives. A throng of 100 red-shirted janitors wearing masks and gloves wield brooms, sweeping cups and bottles into heaping mounds. Another 100 workers in neon safety vests and hard hats attack the stage, pulling up endless lines of tape and uncoupling dozens of stage lights, stowing it all in meticulously labelled purple cases on wheels.

"IF THINGS ARE GOOD NEXT YEAR AND EVERYONE'S FEELING GOOD ABOUT TOURING, I'M SURE WE'LL DO SHOWS." *Mick Jagger*

A rented orange crane slowly lifts workers toward the stage's crown-shaped red roof; now that there's no band left to protect from the rain, it can come down fast. After only 30 minutes, the chairs are almost all gone. The barricades are stacked in rows. The stage is vanishing, a reminder that tonight's great concert hall is, next week, just another sports stadium. This was all a grand illusion of planning and money and power and time. The business that is The Rolling Stones is breaking down a stage, already preparing for the next night of making millions.

On the sidewalk that rings the stadium, however, no one can see the collapsing illusion. People, instead, are still high on the joy it produced, the energy of a few near-octogenarians dancing around like teenage punks. Suddenly, a brass band has arrived unannounced just outside of the gate. They are raucous and loud, pulsing on the weeknight streets of Charlotte like it's a holiday weekend in New Orleans. Teenagers walk past, rolling coolers on wheels and selling cans of light beer for $7 to anyone who needs the party to continue. Lots of people do. They drink and dance and order another round as midnight nears, practically begging the cops milling about to say something stern. It feels thrilling and, for the first time all night, forbidden – this unlicensed street *soirée* in the middle of a banker haven.

The Rolling Stones have gone home, or at least to a hotel. But it's impossible to imagine them not smiling at this *de facto* party they've created after 18 months of lockdown, after beating what seemed very long odds that they'd ever play these shows at all. For a moment, the scene forestalls questions about when The Rolling Stones will finally retire. Their energy, it seems, has simply been transferred to someone else, at least until they try it on again in yet another American football stadium. Ⓜ

No filter: Mick keeps it sartorially low-key.

Shutterstock, , Getty

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

CONTENTS

80 ALBUMS

- Neil Young & Crazy Horse make *Barn*-storming return under open skies
- Blue Note jazz science with Makaya McCraven
- Abba, the hologram truth and nothing but
- Brilliant, weirdo visionary Lana Del Rey
- Plus, The French Dispatch soundtrack, Willie Nelson, Brian Wilson, Nils Frahm, Bitchin Bajas, Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Beverly Glenn-Copeland, The Professionals and more.

92 REISSUES

- David Bowie: reversing into the future
- The Waterboys' Irish adventure continued
- Alien Moog trips with Popol Vuh
- Philly soul searching at the PIR label
- Plus, The Black Keys, The Jazz Butcher, Gregory Porter, Redskins, Bush Tetras and more.

106 BOOKS

- Total recall Paul: McCartney: The Lyrics
- Plus, Leonard Cohen, Lenny Kaye, Genesis, Drive-By Truckers, John Illsley and more.

110 SCREEN

- Freakscene: the weirdness flows through the Dinosaur Jr story.

INDEX

Abba	84	Beverly	87	Pye Corner Audio	87
Abrahams, Leo	86	Hedfi, Houeida	86	Redskins	95
Aloa Input	88	Henderson, Joe	97	Regan, Fionn	100
Bedouine	89	Hesitations, The &		Richard Fearless	90
Berry, Matt	97	Butler, Freddy	95	Rimbaud, Penny	
Bitchin Bajas	86	HOO	90	& Youth	89
Black Keys, The	94	Hurley, Michael	82	Sakamoto, Ryuichi	95
Blunstone, Colin	98	Isbell, Jason,	86	Sinatra, Frank	95
Body/Dilloway/Head	82	Jazz Butcher, The	94	sir Was	83
Bola Sete	95	Jethro Tull	97	Smile	89
Bowie, David	92	Joseph, Martyn	89	Smith, Brix &	
Brown, Barry	100	KVB, The	90	Wilson-Piper, Marty	100
Bush Tetras	100	La Luz	85	Soup	85
Callahan, Bill, and		LaMar Gay, Ben	89	Spidergawd	83
Bonnie 'Prince' Billy	82	Lionlimb	90	Springsteen, Bruce	101
Can	101	Marconi Union	90	Springtime	85
Casimir, Daniel	88	McCraven, Makaya	83	Stereo Total	97
Clerkin Trio, Tara	85	Mollestad, Hedvig	88	Sting	82
Converge	90	Negro, Helado	86	Union Of Knives	87
Cummings, Grace	88	Nelson, Willie	82	VA Cuba: Music And	
Del Rey, Lana	82	Nirvana	101	Revolution 2	97
EERA	87	Nocentelli, Leo	97	VA Fire Draw Near	94
Evian, Sam	89	O'Connell & Love	85	VA Philadelphia	
Faust	97	Orquestra		International Vol 2	100
Fearless, Richard	90	Afro-Basileira	88	VA: The French	
Frahm, Nils	83	Parris	87	Dispatch	85
Gabbard, Andrew	90	Perry, Lee 'Scratch'	86	Vis-À-Vis	94
Gahan, Dave &		Popol Vuh	96	Waterboys, The	94
Soulsavers	83	Porter, Gregory	95	Wilson, Brian	82
Gendron, Myriam	86	Presley, Elvis	95	Young, Neil	80
Glenn-Copeland,		Professionals, The	88	Youth	88

"A weighty concept, Billy Paul's *War Of The Gods*, 'has its fans', but the venture's ambition outstripped the end product."

GEOFF BROWN HEARS THE PHILLY SOUND, REISSUES P100

Mountain language

Hay hay, my my – Neil Young's 41st studio album sees him saddling up Crazy Horse and thinking about the good old days. By **Keith Cameron**. Illustration by **Justin Metz**.

Neil Young & Crazy Horse

★★★★

Barn

REPRISE. CD/DL/LP

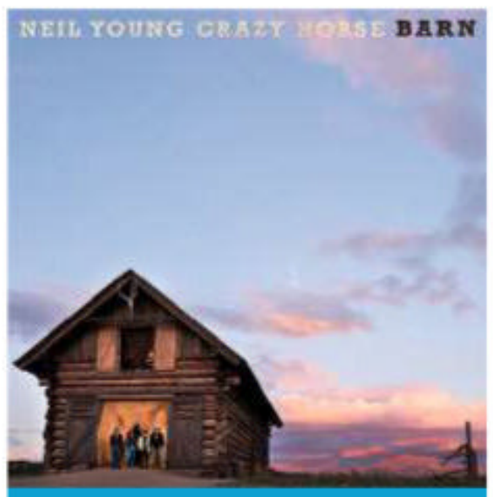
SO STRONG is their spiritual bond, it's worth acknowledging that Neil Young has made three times as many albums without Crazy Horse as with. "That's why they're so special," he told MOJO in 2018. "If I'd made Crazy Horse my band on every record, I'd have made a lot fewer records. You can't keep on doing the same things over and over again."

At 76, however, perhaps Young is more inclined to enjoy the moments he and his favoured group have left. *Barn* is his second successive Crazy Horse outing, and as with 2019's *Colorado* its utilitarian title indicates where it was made: yup, a barn, in the Colorado Rockies. The two records also share a ramshackle aura: live recordings, balancing acoustic quietude with electric crackle. And like its predecessor, *Barn* opens with a song that mentions geese, simply because, one imagines, Neil looked out the window and saw some "honkers flyin' low above the waves".

Write what you see, play what you feel. That philosophy has served Neil Young and Crazy Horse pretty well down the years. Yet *Barn* isn't the record people traditionally expect – or hope for – from NYCH. It's low on volcanic twin guitar melodrama. This is not the Crazy Horse of Down By The River, or Like A Hurricane; a different animal made the fabled likes of *Rust Never Sleeps* or *Ragged Glory*, or indeed *Psychedelic Pill*, 2012's towering smokestack of epic jams that was the last studio ride for guitarist Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro, retired hurt and succeeded by his immediate predecessor, Nils Lofgren, who saddled up on *Colorado* for the first time since the *Tonight's The Night* sessions in 1973.

Neil Young didn't get where he is by pandering to expectations and he wasn't bringing back Nils Lofgren to merely play the role of a Crazy Horse guitarist. But while as early as track two, *Colorado* offered She Showed Me Love, an archetypal 13-minute Horse marathon, it's not until *Barn*'s fourth song, Canerica, that Young and Lofgren even plug in together. And then, at 2:44, with Neil's exultant peals signalling the start of an overdue rust-busting odyssey, the song simply fades out.

If Young and Crazy Horse no longer feel the burn, that's surely forgivable. Ralph Molina and Billy Talbot are both 78, two years older than Neil, with Nils representing the young generation at 70. Ostensibly a replacement for Sampedro's corrugated chug, Lofgren offers Young heightened musicality, and more options: he plays as much piano as guitar on *Barn*, while his accordion is all over opener Song Of The Seasons, a lilting autumnal meditation on time's passage in the big country. "I see that nature makes no mistake," Young murmurs, a pointed lyric in an understated song.



"Crazy Horse better validate Neil Young than any other band."

Crazy Horse seem to soften the force yet heighten the impact of Young's ongoing eco-conscious lyrical agenda. Song Of The Seasons seems to admit as much, as Neil notes "the horse's gait/In the rhythm that I feel somehow/In the melody that I play."

The rhythm of Crazy Horse means Molina and Talbot, a drum and bass team not always renowned for delicacy. Significantly, *Barn* is produced by Niko Bolas. A regular Young associate – the self-styled 'Volume Dealers' – he spooked the Horse engine room in 1987 during the initial *This Note's For You* sessions by suggesting to Young that Ralph and Billy weren't up to the job. The jilted pair responded with a Crazy Horse album titled *Left For Dead*, and lingering friction subsequently saw Bolas hand over *Ragged Glory* to David Briggs after just one song. Yet now Molina and Talbot bring beautifully light touches to both *Barn*'s opener and its lullaby-sweet bookend Don't Forget Love, plus hallmark scorched earth at points in-between. They also keep a more or less steady beat (and possibly straight faces) during the country honk of Shape Of You, a bedazzled ode to Daryl Hannah that has Young near-yodelling, "You changed my life for the better/Wore my love like your favourite sweater."

A clutch of political songs undercuts the whimsy, although of course Neil Young can get pretty whimsical up on the soapbox too. Canerican is his Canadian immigrant's patriotic paean to American democracy, flushed with optimism for a post-Trump era. The harmonica-happy Change Ain't Never Gonna recalls the quirkier corners of *Greendale* – "Ten men had to get a new job/To try to save the planet from a fuel-burnin' mob" – and demonstrates that Crazy Horse better validate Young's notionally throwaway stuff than any other band. Human Race, meanwhile, is the amp-smelting barn-burner, a furious lament for the planet ("Today no one cares/Tomorrow no one shares"). It threatens to unleash the Horse for a long gallop, only for Young to keep returning to the mike, voice cracking with rage at what his generation will bequeath "the children of the fires and floods".

A sturdy enough vehicle for Young's polemics, Crazy Horse are an even stronger conduit for the metaphysics of their union – the mystical shit. It doesn't have to be a heavy scene. Heading West is glorious foundational electric boogie, a hymn to the "good old days", with Nils on saloon bar piano and BVs, detailing Neil's childhood, his parents' break-up, how mommy got him his first guitar, Young digging the quotidian joys: "Sometimes it feels *all right*, livin' in a western town."

But when you want it dark, no one does dark like Neil Young and Crazy Horse. First there's They Might Be Lost, harmonica and damp fog piano as the narrator waits "for the boys to come get the goods". It's like a crime scene about to happen, or its aftermath. "The smoke that I burn keeps takin' me to the old days," breathes Young. Then, the main event: "I'm gonna sing an old song to you right now/One that you heard before." This is Welcome Back, almost nine minutes of classic rippling Crazy Horse murmuration, feedback flashes and blackened tones bent like pages from a ghostly navigator's atlas. "Riding through this storm might remind me of who we are," intones Young, "and why we walk so lowly."

It's a line that cuts through to the heart of the matter, and the Horse, inimitably, dependably, bring it home. Only these people can do this. And although you might not necessarily swap today's Neil Young & Crazy Horse album for stuff they did way back, it's like the guy in They Might Be Lost says: "The jury is out on the old days, you know." *Barn* provides – best enjoy it while you can. Because we know how time fades away.

Backgrid UK

BACK STORY: GOD BLESS CANERICA

● "I am American, American is what I am." He may not always be a reliable witness, but Neil Young's lyric on Canerican tells the truth. As the song says, Young was born in Canada, but had been resident in California since the mid-'60s ("Came south to join a band"), finally applying for US citizenship in 2019 so he could vote against President Trump. His application was initially held up due to "marijuana-related activities", but on January 23, 2020 he announced his official 'Canerican' dual status.

BARNIN'

NEIL YOUNG
CRAZY HORSE

FILTER ALBUMS

Lana Del Rey

★★★★

Blue Banisters

INTERSCOPE/POLYDOR. CD/DL/LP

Skittish pop queen takes elegant sideways step.

"I guess you could call it textbook," sings Lana Del Rey as *Blue Banisters* begins: while she's darkly analysing her father-figure quest, the line could apply to *Chemtrails Over The Country Club*'s speedy follow-up. Classic Del Rey markers light up like cat's eyes: Los Angeles (Arcadia); needy bad girls (Black Bathing Suit); worse men (Thunder); clumsy political references (Textbook). Yet there are shifts. Dealer's end-of-evening trip-hop (featuring Miles Kane) delivers a necessary stylistic jolt amid the Diamonds And Rust melancholia and stately piano. Blue Banisters, all panoramic Ladies Of The Canyon domesticity, or Wildflower Wildfire's family drama feel blazingly personal, burning up those old authenticity arguments, while on a lyrically strong album, Sweet Carolina's antique trill is brilliantly buckled by its words ("'Crypto forever,' screams your stupid boyfriend/Fuck you, Kevin"). It's not Del Rey at full *Norman Fucking Rockwell* stretch, but even in her zone, nothing about it is comfortable.

Victoria Segal

Bill Callahan And Bonnie 'Prince' Billy

★★★★

Blind Date Party

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Singles get together for no-strings fun.

A pandemic by-product, *Blind Date Party* collects the covers released by Will Oldham, Bill Callahan and their guest stars since 2020. While there are reflective moments – Meg Baird joining in with Little Feat's I've Been The One – the highlights often project the antic glee generated by the suspension of normal rules. Their own songs are joyfully dismantled and swapped: Ben Chasny helps melt down Oldham's Arise, Therefore; Smog's Our Anniversary is turned into an indie-metal tumult. There are no inhibitions on Billie Eilish's Wish You Were Gay, either, High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan helping with future-disco spin, or Robert Wyatt's Sea Song where their madness fits in nicely with that of The Dirty Three's Mick Turner. Silver Jews' The Wild Kindness, meanwhile, gathers a choir of artists in unmawkish salute to David Berman. A nonchalant tribute to friendship and community, *Blind Date Party* is intriguing enough to be more than a one-night thing.

Victoria Segal

Body/Dilloway/Head

★★★

Body/Dilloway/Head

THREE LOBED. DL/LP

Kim Gordon's improv project, now expanded to a trio.

According to Kim Gordon's autobiography, 2015's Girl In A Band, it was she who brought the conceptual art and jazz/improvisation to Sonic Youth, and, aside from *No Home Record*, her pre-pandemic solo synth-pop outing, she has deployed her time since SY's dissolution working at the 'free' end of music, chiefly alongside Bill Nace in two-guitar Body/Head. Here, that duality acquires a third pole, as Wolf Eyes' Aaron Dilloway joins up, and immediately makes his presence felt on the side one-filling piece Body/Erase, whose opening six minutes resemble an accidental recording made inside an overcoat pocket, before mediated snatches of feedback further hint towards this maverick tape manipulator's dark art. On the flip, Goin' Down weaves a subtly morphing web of cyclical hypnosis, while 13-minute Secret Cuts collages assorted noise loops, linked by a two-note drone 'chorus'. Is it music? Is it Art? No, it's Gordon returning to her roots, where such notions are perpetually, artfully challenged.

Andrew Perry

Michael Hurley

★★★★

The Time Of The Foxgloves

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

Long-awaited new studio LP from much-loved American troubadour. A gem.

It's been 12 years since 80-year-old Michael Hurley released a new studio album. A bunch of reissues helped fill the time between, but here at last is the follow-up. From the very first listen, these 11 songs sound like they've been here forever. Well, a few actually *have* been around for some time – like the revisited/reworked closing track Lush Green Trees. Or Love Is The Closest Thing, spare and simply lovely, with acoustic guitar and Hurley's fine, dusty voice backed by one of several female backing singers who guest on the album. There's four different banjo players on here too. Recorded at home in Oregon on four-track tape, musician friends added parts long-distance, including piano, dobro, bass clarinet, pump organ and violin. Some highlights: sweet old bluesy-folk Little Blue River; strangely hymnlike Jacob's Ladder and drifting, dreamy Knocko The Monk.

Sylvie Simmons

Willie Nelson

★★★★

The Willie Nelson Family

SONY LEGACY. CD/DL

The Nelsons sing of faith in God and each other.

Spirituality and family are recurring themes in Willie Nelson's work – the rule-breaking maverick has a strong grounding in tradition. One of his first compositions was Family Bible, which became a country gospel standard, and his band is called The Family. He's joined here by sister Bobbie on piano and his son Lukas shares lead vocals, while other offspring Paula, Amy and Micah sing back-up – Nelsons all. Half the songs are Willie classics (Heaven And Hell; Laying My Burdens Down), while others are Carter Family, Hank Williams and Kris Kristofferson covers. Highlights include Bobbie's stately keyboard that undergirds the session with church-like simplicity. The finest track is Lukas's high tenor take on George Harrison's All Things Must Pass, a hymn to wisdom and humility, its timelessness reinforced as a country song.

Michael Simmons

Brian Wilson

★★★★

At My Piano

DECCA. CD/DL/LP

A man, a piano and 15 instrumental versions of his songs.

THIS IS Wilson at his piano – alone, no backing band, overdubs or even vocals – playing selections from his songbook in what sounds like an empty room. Remarkably intimate and raw, this must have been how Tony Asher and Van Dyke Parks heard songs like God Only Knows and Surf's Up before writing those lyrics. The majority – and those that work best in this solitary setting – are bittersweet, melancholy songs. In My Room and The Warmth Of The Sun, with their left-hand arpeggios, sound simultaneously childlike and sophisticated, while California Girls sounds a bit karaoke. There's a couple of unexpected tracks, including Sketches Of Smile. Why did he make this album? "Honestly, the piano and the music I create on it has probably saved my life." One for the fans delighted he's still here and fascinated by how such classic songs started out.

Sylvie Simmons

Brian Wilson: piano his forte.

Sting

★★★

The Bridge

A&M. CD/DL/LP

He's only gone back to making a 'proper' Sting LP.

In the five years since *57th & 9th*, Sting has made an album with Shaggy (here demoted to handclaps on only If It's Love, the poppiest moment), re-recorded some old material and guested on a Ricky Martin track. Now, it's finally back to work with a proper album and *The Bridge* is Sting at his most-Sting like. On Rushing Water he notes, "I see my shrink on an analyst's couch/Hit me with a hammer and I'll say 'ouch'", while Captain Bateman's Basement is a scat-fest, and Fields Of Gold meets Shape Of My Heart on For Her Love, although he rather spoils things with a feeble (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay. Elsewhere, Harmony Road, with its understated state-of-the-nation take and a brief, gorgeous Branford Marsalis saxophone solo shows what an elegant songwriter Sting can still be when he focuses.

John Aizlewood

Pamela Littky

Nils Frahm

★★★

Old Friends
New Friends

LEITER. CD/DL/LP

Unreleased solo piano pieces from 2009-2021, unearthed and rebooted.

For Berlin-based composer/producer Nils Frahm, the last year has offered a chance to organise his huge archive, yielding this double album of previously unheard solo piano pieces. These intimate, often home-recorded pieces showcase a different side of Frahm from, say, his electronic work with FS Blumm, or his studio-based solo piano pieces. But Frahm's proprietary blend of melody and ambient space is unmistakeable on such as Rain Take, where his rolling torrents of notes, blurred with reverb, seem to duet with the downpour outside his window, or The Idea Machine, an unhurried Satie-esque piece where the lo-fi recording feels as much artistic decision as situational necessity. For all its neo-classical leanings, Frahm's music engages emotion as much as intellect, these sketches and fragments offering a meditative respite from a world far more chaotic than this music.

Stevie Chick

sir Was

★★★

Let The Morning Come

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES. CD/DL/LP

Third LP by Gothenburg's Joel Wästberg.

The pandemic put many careers on hold, but sir Was, AKA Joel Wästberg, had more pressing health issues to worry about. Last August, the 39-year-old was diagnosed with having a gene which causes strokes and, with *Let The Morning Come* almost complete, he suffered a serious one in January. Happily, the childhood saxophone prodigy, who spent time in South Africa studying the local music and toured as part of José González's indie-folk band Junip, is restored and none of his past underpins *Let The Morning Come*. Instead, his ethereal vocals drift over a lush, dreamy backdrop, similar to a less strident Empire Of The Sun, most notably on Waiting For The Weekend, while the moderately more bracing Hope We'll Make It Through tips a hat to *Morph The Cat*-era Donald Fagen. An unassuming but intricate pleasure.

John Aizlewood

Michael McDermott

Dave Gahan & Soulsavers

★★★

Imposter

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP

More songs of faith and devotion from Depeche Mode frontman.

After the wayward collaboration of their first two LPs – Mark Lanegan, Will Oldham and Richard Hawley among the participants – Rich Machin's Soulsavers project has settled into a companionable groove with Dave Gahan. *Imposter*, their third record together, is a covers set, Gahan bringing the stormy drama Machin's soulful mood-building demands. A narrative arc of love, loss and endurance connects opener The Dark End Of The Street to the bouquet-strewn finale of Always On My Mind, Gahan's gifts for bitter abjection (Rowland S Howard's Shut Me Down, Neil Young's A Man Needs A Maid) and hand-over-heart testifying (Cat Power's Metal Heart, P.J. Harvey's The Desperate Kingdom Of Love) well-served in between. A grandly expansive version of Dylan's Not Dark Yet underlines Gahan's commitment to selling these songs, ensuring *Imposter*, if not essential, always rings true.

Victoria Segal

Spidergawd

★★★

VI

CRISPIN GLOVER. CD/DL/LP

Wayward Norwegians summon the NWOBHM spirit.

The urgent, engaging *VI* tracks a refined metal with vocal harmonies and anthemic, immediate melodies. The catchy Yours Truly could have been the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal crossover hit that never was, while Into The Deep Serene allows a prog edge in. Up to their 2016 album *III*, it was reasonable to see Spidergawd as a Motorpsycho offshoot as they featured two-thirds of the Trondheim sonic warriors: bassist Bent Sæther and drummer Kenneth Kapstad. Sæther bowed out and, after leaving Motorpsycho, Kapstad continued with Spidergawd. Album six, their most direct to date, features recently arrived co-lead guitarist Brynjar Takle Ohr. Kapstad's walloping drums have always been a defining factor, now the double guitars lend a Thin Lizzy flavour. "Climb aboard my time machine," demands Into The Deep Serene. In 1983, stadiums would have beckoned.

Kieron Tyler

"Come in here and swing": Makaya McCraven updates Blue Note.

American Standard Time

Risk-averse Chicago drummer/producer's rhythmically deep reimagining of Blue Note material. By **Andy Cowan**.

Makaya McCraven

★★★★

Deciphering The Message

BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP

EVER SINCE he added hip-hop chops to the traditional jazz trio format on 2012 debut *Split Decision*, Paris-born, Chicago-based drummer Makaya McCraven has devoted his energies to blurring the lines between live performance and digital production. The self-styled beat scientist's follow-ups *In The Moment* (2015) and *Universal Beings* (2018) shifted the rules of creation further, layering and splicing together long improvised jams with a clutch of worldly new jazz arrivistes (including Brandee Younger, Tomeka Reid, Shabaka Hutchings, Nubya Garcia) into carefully structured pieces, while *We're New Again* (2020) – his refiguring of Gil Scott-Heron's final album *I'm New Here* – returned the late revolutionary poet to his soul jazz roots.

The son of US jazz drummer Stephen McCraven and Hungarian folk singer Ágnes Zsigmondi sets out his collagist stall – mixing samples from the original Blue Note tracks with new sessions – with a jittery refit of Hank Mobley's A Slice Of The Top. McCraven's agile percussion and Junius Paul's quick-fingered bass runs accentuate its unusual five-brass voice mix – Mobley's tenor dramatically offset by alto sax, trumpet, tuba and euphonium. His muscular rhythmic instincts also enhance the subtleties of Kenny Dorham's muted solo on Sunset and the joyous style of trumpeter Clifford Brown's Wail Bait, transforming the once pensive balladry of vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson's Tranquillity with artful use of echo and compression.

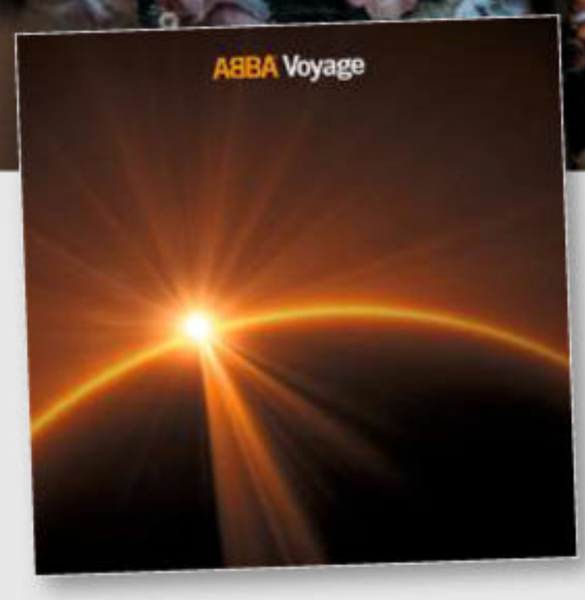
Elsewhere, he digs deeper into the laidback funk corners and legato purity of pianist Jack Wilson's often overlooked Frank's Tune, enhancing its two-step groove with De'Sean Jones's questing flute, and shows a particular affinity with the hard bop propulsion of Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers. Blakey's imaginative polyrhythms are pitched more forcefully against the sharp-edged sax trade-offs of When Your Lover Has Gone, while he ups the swing quotient and off-kilter melodic contours of Mr Jin (even doubling down on its thunderous tom-tom intro).

Add in the expressive fretwork of guitarists Matt Gold and Jeff Parker, debonair vibraphone twizzles of Joel Ross and sensitive brass of trumpeter Marquis Hill and alto saxophonist Greg Ward and these sensitively sculptured, far from overwrought arrangements have tangibly pervasive results.

While McCraven cherry picks from a wide span of Blue Note history – from the pre-hard bop of Horace Silver Trio to Eddie Gale's free jazz/gospel hybrids – his subtle beat shapeshifting is the hypnotic glue that unites the free-flowing results, hanging together like an early-hours club set, detailed with Blakey's exhortations to "come in here and swing".

Some purists will doubtless froth, but Makaya McCraven's alchemical abilities and subliminal technical savvy offer both a sensitive update of the Blue Note label's depth-charged catalogue and a welcome pathfinder for the uninitiated.

Here they go again: Abba's Björn Ulvaeus (left) and Benny Andersson at the controls; (below) Anni-Frid Lyngstad (left) and Agnetha Fältskog.



The Impossible Dream

This is where the story ends. This is goodbye. By **Jim Irvin**.

Abba

★★★

Voyage

UNIVERSAL. CD/DL/LP

THEY SAY THEY never said never, but they may as well have. It was reasonably assumed that something like this would never happen. But having happened, what did they use the occasion to do? Reassert their majesty? Rewrite history? Act like 40 years hadn't passed? Well, no, no and no.

Voyage is a carefully measured, somewhat downbeat final word. A dignified line drawn under a unique saga, one of the more extraordinary in pop history. The story ends, it turns out, with neither bang nor whimper, but with a wistful, mature summation, as four people in their seventies say goodbye to their pop lives with affection, skill and a particular melancholy that one doesn't hear too often.

You'll probably wish *Voyage* was stronger. But it might have been weaker. Though, as Björn and Benny have said in interviews, if it didn't work at all there was no reason to release it. Completed after the forthcoming stage show had been greenlit – the recent singles date back to 2018 – it didn't need to function as souvenir soundtrack for the youthful Abbatars that front the stage experience. (I wouldn't be surprised if that were still to come.) Instead, Björn and Benny wrote songs that resonate with them now – as grandparents, older and wiser souls with a deep pool of memories – using stylistic flourishes that echo their youthful selves.

Some echoes are explicit: child-of-divorce saga Keep An Eye On Dan ends with a little quotation from SOS; Fernando's Peruvian flutes open eco-hymn Bumblebee. Some echoes are less obvious: the Celtic flavour of Arrival permeates When You Danced With Me. Back in the day, they used George McCrae and Chic as guides. That, or its equivalent, hasn't happened here. Here is Abba at their most folksy, hymnal and classical. I Still Have Faith In You will one day be a hit for a choir of fisherman's wives, or something, mark my words. Björn and Benny have described their stance writing these songs as "absolutely trend-blind". They've spent the last four decades involved in musical theatre, and it shows. These songs are, mostly, stagey and conservative.

They also lean quite heavily on the sentimentality lever. Little Things, a song for parents on Christmas morning, complete with a chunk of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, may be the most saccharine thing they've ever recorded. You've really got to be in the mood for syrup that runs this deep. And country-flavoured weepie I Can Be That Woman, in which an unravelling couple fight in front of their dog ("She jerks every time you swear"), is, let's say, no Winner Takes It All. In contrast, the closing Ode To Freedom judges its sentimentality perfectly, remaining stately and subdued.

Agnetha and Frida are in great shape vocally, and it's thrilling to hear them combine once more, though they can't hope to sparkle in exactly the same, uncanny way they once did. I missed the late Ola Brunkert's beautifully buoyant but anchored drumming, which provided so much sway, lift and punch. And these mixes seem to lack the clarity and perfection Abba are famed for. For example, the two rockers, Just A Notion and No Doubt About It, seem to swim with sonic information.

But, whatever. While there's nothing here that immediately screams to be considered in the front rank of their output, the more you listen, the more it feels like being reunited with some long-lost, missing-presumed-dead relatives. Invoking a similar kind of recognition tinged with bewilderment – on both sides.

Undoubtedly the work of four masters who have always spent considerable time perfecting their work, but whose heads have not been tuned to the hum of pop music for a very long time, *Voyage* is just as good as you might expect.

Ludvig Andersson (3)

La Luz

★★★

La Luz

HARDLY ART. CD/DL/LP/MC

Spooked fourth album from surf and doo-wop loving trio.

Seattle's La Luz have always spiked their cocktail of surf rock and doo-wop with a generous pinch of unease and menace. The trio's second album *Weirdo Shrine* was inspired by a graphic novel in which 1970s teenagers are grotesquely mutated by a mysterious STD, and while the lyrics to this self-titled fourth LP draw from their newly adopted surroundings of rural California, a spooked malevolence still lurks within their razor-sharp twangs and floating harmonies. There's an eerie Wicker Man spell blowing through the swaying melody of In The Country, while The Pines careers through the California hills like a B-movie getaway car, and throughout songs wobble and bend under the influence of a warped, psychedelic queasiness. Given the band's stylistic M.O., things could have easily slipped into a kitsch pastiche by this stage, yet La Luz continue to find fresh avenues to explore.

Chris Catchpole

O'Connell & Love

★★★★

Will You Be There?

MOUNTMELLICK. CD/DL/LP

Second album from Alabama 3 singer and chum.

Brendan O'Connell and Rob 'Larry Love' Spragg's intriguing *Minesweeping* album of 2015 wasn't their first collaboration, but it was their first as a duo. Six years later, the formula remains similar. This time around there are no famous guests, but there's whistling on Riddles In The Sand, humming on If Love Is All You Got and acoustic plucking to spare. Beyond the near-spoken, hymnal You're Gonna Need Someone, Love's vocals are notably less grizzled than his work with Alabama 3. They're not afraid to keep things simple on I Got A Woman and the bustling Hurry Home, but they're at their best when they're more complex, hence the multi-layered balm of When You Were The Moonlight, with its strings and choir, or The Belle Of Clare where the guitar is Latin and the all-pervading sense of rue gruffly heartbreaking.

John Aizlewood

Springtime

★★★★

Springtime

JOYFUL NOISE. CD/DL/LP

Australian trio's exhilarating debut brings stormy weather rather than spring.

Having branched out with the gnarly psychedelia of Tropical Fuck Storm, Drones singer/guitarist Gareth Liddiard teams up with Dirty Three drummer Jim White and Necks pianist Chris Abrahams. *Springtime* has two approaches; one more methodical, like the intense, needling Will To Power, which slowly builds its mood of Bad Seeds-like malevolence as Liddiard fumes over humanity's hapless tendencies ("Pentagon, captagon, privatised war immunity, impunity… it's every man for himself"). The other is rooted in improv (Abrahams' specialty). Jeanie In A Bottle's ebbing, fraying drama fits the lyrics – by Liddiard's uncle, esteemed British poet Ian Duhig – about the perils of alcohol; The Island and The Killing Of The Village Idiot are increasingly tense, frequently beautiful explorations, with Liddiard's lived-in croon, guitar scree and raging poetry up against Abrahams' rolling notes and White's scattershot fills.

Martin Aston

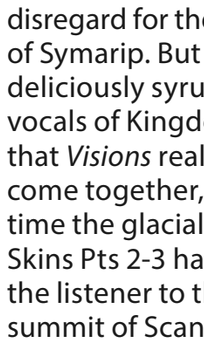
Soup

★★★

Visions

CRISPIN GLOVER. CD/DL/LP

Mellotron adventurers set the controls for the heart of your mum.



Fifteen-minute opening track Burning Bridges achieves the perfect union of form and function, its endless stately chord progressions cutting off all physical connection between *Visions* and the once bustling harbour-side of verse chorus verse. We're not listening to Kansas any more, Toto, and the brazen prog Clayderman tendencies of fleeting CP70 rhapsody Skins Pt 1 show a similarly determined disregard for the influence of Symarip. But with the deliciously syrupy falsetto vocals of Kingdom Of Color that *Visions* really starts to come together, and by the time the glacial transitions of Skins Pts 2-3 have conveyed the listener to the breathless summit of Scandi-pomp grandiosity, *Visions* has proved that it's not just Opeth that springs eternal – the first six Moody Blues albums do too.

Ben Thompson

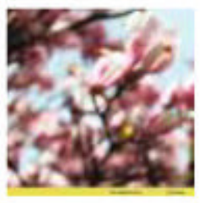
Tara Clerkin Trio

★★★★

In Spring

WORLD OF ECHO. DL/LP

Short album of big and small ideas from experimental Bristol trio.



Following almost a decade in Bristol's live DIY experimental scene playing in various punk, space-rock and psych-folk outfits, multi-instrumentalists Tara Clerkin, and brothers Sunny-Joe Paradisos and Patrick Benjamin have now formed this small and hopefully more permanent outfit. With Clerkin providing floaty clarinet and woozy vocals, and Benjamin and Paradisos adding keyboards, drums and cello, this follow-up to their eponymous 2019 debut is a surreal brand of organic ambient pop-jazz with a loose hold on the anchors of reality. A tauntingly short record with a very long tail, it calls to mind the melancholy English eccentricities of Robert Wyatt and Plone, the skewed '90s dream-pop of Laika and Moonshake, but also the blurred shadows of West Country pastoral spiritualists, Movietone. As diaphanous and comforting as a friendly ghost.

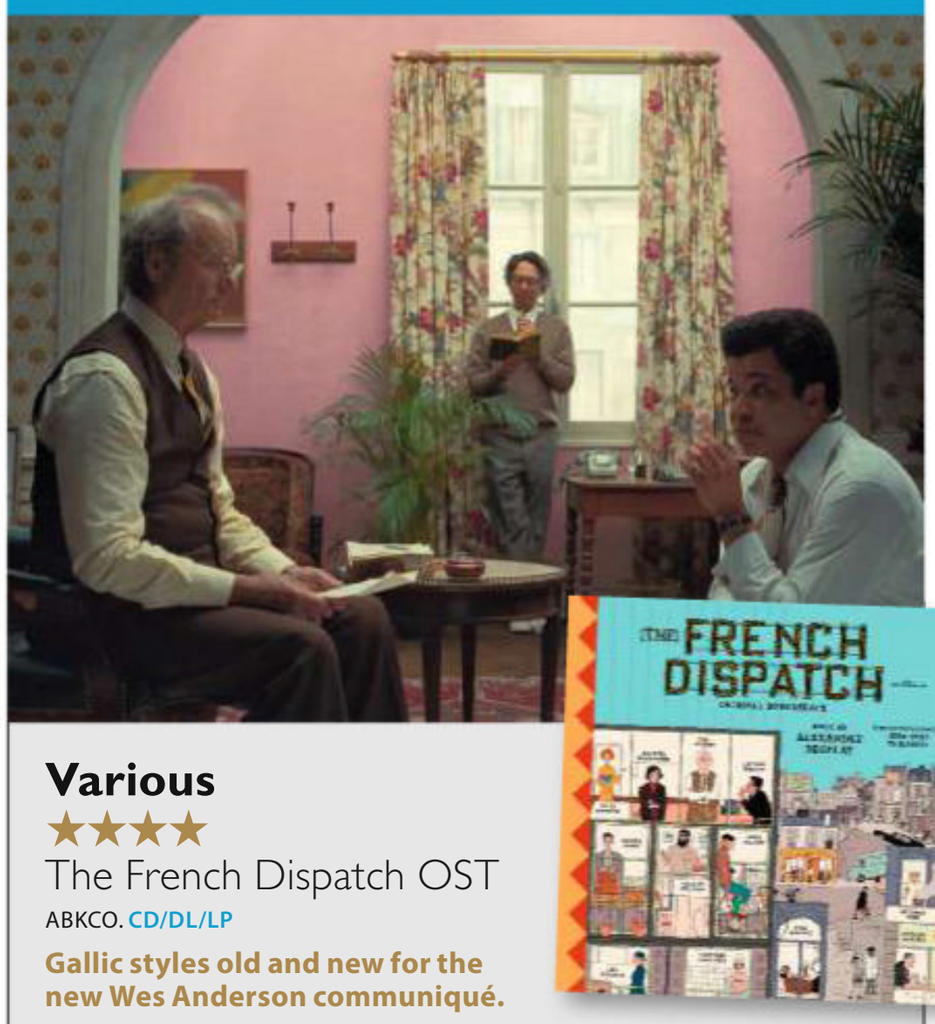
Andrew Male

Lasse Hoile

Beached: Soup, masters of Scandi-pomp.

SOUNDTRACKS

BY ANDREW MALE



Various

★★★★

The French Dispatch OST

ABKCO. CD/DL/LP

Gallic styles old and new for the new Wes Anderson communiqué.

THE NEW film from the button-down master of deliberate design is a portmanteau of tales centred around a fictitious expatriate magazine operating out of a fictional French city, Ennui-sur-Blasé. Soundtracking these tales is a delicate original score of light guitar and piano dances composed by longtime Wes Anderson collaborator Alexandre Desplat. Interspersed between these numbers are perfect pieces of old pop (Charles Aznavour, Grace Jones, The Swingle Singers) selected by Anderson's DJ-amanuensis, Randall Poster. There is also an endearingly awkward cover of Christophe's dramatic 1966 weepie Aline, performed by Jarvis Cocker. Expanding on that aesthetic, Cocker has released an entire album of French pop, *Chansons d'Ennui Tip-Top* in which he tackles songs by Françoise Hardy, Serge Gainsbourg, Brigitte Bardot and Jacques Dutronc with a daring disregard for the charm and craft of the originals. Hearing Lætitia Sadier duet with Cocker on a brace of tracks hints at what could have been.

ALSO RELEASED

Tim Hecker

★★★★

The North Water

INVADA. DL/LP

For his first officially released score, the Canadian sound artist invests the TV adaptation of Ian McGuire's ship-bound Arctic murder mystery with a textural backdrop of electronic drone, found sound and treated cello, creating a world of whale calls, creaking ice, groaning wood, and brooding dread that seems to exist simultaneously outside and inside the doomed setting of the drama.

Stealing Sheep & The Radiophonic Workshop

★★

La Planète Sauvage

FIRE. DL/LP

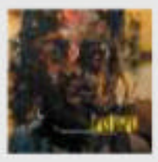
What possessed the Scouse psych-folk modernists to work with Bob Earland, Dick Mills and Roger Limb and rescore René Laloux's 1973 sci-fi animation? Regardless, they've replaced Alain Goraguer's original chicken-scratch orch-funk ecstasies with some heavy'n'hairy prog thud, the occasional analogue whizz-bang and an intrusive Broadcasting House voiceover.

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe

★★★★

Candyman OST

SACRED BONES/WAXWORK. DL/LP



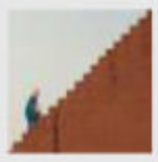
If Nia DaCosta and Jordan Peele's recent reworking of Bernard Rose's '90s horror failed to hit the spot, the same cannot be said of the soundtrack by NYC composer and ex Lichens' alumnus Rob AA Lowe. Bending and mutating motifs and themes from Philip Glass's original score, Lowe crafts a brooding nightmare of massed voices, warped strings and hypnotic dread.

Ahmoudou Madassane

★★★★

Zerzura

BANDCAMP. CD/DL/LP



A welcome re-up on Bandcamp, this 2018 soundtrack by actor and Tuareg guitarist Madassane is a gorgeous discovery. Written for "the first ever Saharan acid western", it's a series of fuzzed-out, free-form desert blues improvisations; ambient electric acid-scapes recorded live in the studio by Madassane and Oregon guitarist Marisa Anderson. Imagine Neil Young's *Dead Man* parched by the desert sun and you're halfway there. *AM*

Houeida Hedfi: beguiling and cinematic.

Houeida Hedfi

★★★★

Fleuves De L'Âme

PHANTASY SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Modernity and trad folk intermesh on Tunisian percussionist's swirling debut.

THE LONG-GESTATING results of a nine-year collaboration with The Knife's Olof Dreijer (that took in 2015 live shows as Hiya wal Âalam), *Fleuves De L'Âme* finds percussionist, composer and academic Houeida Hedfi putting her discrete spin on the spiritual trance of stambeli. Melodically rich highlights such as Souffles Du Nil, Appel Du Danube and the three-movement Envol Du Mékong (all titled after great winding rivers) rest heavily on Jalal Nader's resonant bouzouk refrains and Radhi Chaouali's lucid strings, as contrapuntal pianos and fragmented vocals add generous

hints of menace. Hedfi's richest percussive textures dominate Echos De Medjerda – a play-off against Dreijer's deep, throaty recorder – and 18-minute Cheminement Du Tigre, an experimental *tour de force* that flirts shamelessly with free jazz. It's a fitting zenith to a beguiling outing, cinematic in scope and ambition.

Andy Cowan

Jason Isbell And The 400 Unit

★★★★

Georgia Blue

SOUTHEASTERN. CD/DL/LP

Isbell, band and guests cover songs by great Georgia artists.

In a belated thank you to the 2020 Election swing state of Georgia, Isbell and co's latest fires on the participants' shared affection for the material. Deeper cuts such as Indigo Girls' Kid Fears, here a luminous duet for Brandi Carlisle and Julien Baker, sit alongside a take on R.E.M.'s Nightswimming with banjo pecks from Béla Fleck, and Brittney Spencer's stirring reading of James Brown's It's A Man's Man's Man's World. With The Black Crowes' Steve Gorman helming a combustible version of said act's Sometimes Salvation, Isbell himself shining on Otis Redding's I've Been Loving You Too Long, and Cat Power, Vic Chesnutt and The Allman Brothers Band also covered, *Georgia Blue*'s diversity of Georgia sounds sits well with its campaign for inclusivity. Highlight? The Truth, originally by country-blues great Precious Bryant, sweetly sung by Adia Victoria. All proceeds from the album will go to voting rights and social housing charities.

James McNair

Bitchin Bajas

★★★★

Switched On Ra

DRAG CITY. DL/MC

Chi-Town kosmischers' salute to Sun Ra.

Four years after the ambitious prog-drone explorations of 2017's *Baja Fresh*, Cooper Crain's electronic loop gurus go back to some kind of basics with cassette-only variations on the cosmic Arkestra *oeuvre* of Herman P. Blount, played in a Wendy Carlos style. A salute to individuality, experiment, and the joy of the non-binary, this is the sound of 19 different keyboards (Yamahas, Rolands, Korgs, Casios, Ace Tone, Crumar DS-2) imagining a parallel world where the test record in every '70s hi-fi home was Wendy C micro-Mooging her way through the Sun Ra spaceways. The combination highlights the innocence and beauty of both styles, like forgotten '70s TV themes soundtracking scientific experiments or lonely IBM computers hymning their own obsolescence. The Akai EWI 5000 voice-samples singing We Travel The Spaceways is a mournfully beautiful highlight.

Andrew Male

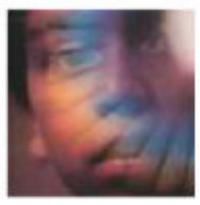
Helado Negro

★★★★

Far In

4AD. CD/DL/LP

From Brooklyn: a leftfield masterpiece of dreamy bedroom tropicália.



It's in the liminal space between consciousness and sleep that you'll find Roberto Carlos Lange, playfully smudging the boundaries between disco and lullaby. His seventh LP as Helado Negro is a sensual, hallucinatory delight, its weightless songs evoking the effortless art-pop of Arthur Russell, the hazy soul-funk of Shuggie Otis and the *sui generis* genius of Juana Molina. Using sequencers, synths and droll, multitracked vocals, Lange conjures hypnagogic disco (Gemini And Leo), dubby trances (Hometown Dream), soft-focus devotionals (Purple Tones) and lulling aural travelogues (Aguas Frías). Lange's songs are deftly composed, but *Far In* also rejoices in sound as a purely sensory experience, the muted throb of Outside The Outside bleeding in like house music from a nearby club, the shimmering gongs of Thank You Forever engulfing the listener in its blissed-out reveries. Its post-midnight magic is infectious, undeniable.

Stevie Chick

Leo Abrahams

★★★

Scene Memory II

FIGUREIGHT. DL/LP

An air of deep tension pervades Eno collaborator's first solo guitar LP in 15 years.

The polar opposite of spotlight-hogging shredder Yngwie Malmsteen, Leo Abrahams delves into his instrument's farthest reaches across a series of unscripted interactions with Ableton patches (first trialled on a 2019 Siberian tour). The self-labelled 'anti-virtuosic' guitarist is an almost ethereal presence on *Scene Memory II*, ghosting in and out of the celestially-inclined drama of Spiral Trem, the paradisiacal chords of Ruins and descending melancholic figures of The Wides – often playing just a few notes but making every one count – before all the spooks gather on the ghostly graveyard waltz of Outpost. Ambient without being remotely 'new age', with abrupt shifts in character, Abrahams will appeal to fans of Vini Reilly, Harold Budd or Robert Fripp, without sounding like anyone but himself.

Andy Cowan

Lee 'Scratch' Perry

★★★

My Name Is Pipecock Jackxon

JAMRA. DL/LP

Pipecock Jackxon impishly revisited.

The first posthumous Perry album loosely reworks the better songs of 1980's *The Return Of Pipecock Jackxon*, an unfinished LP that was the last to emerge from the Black Ark. The new versions were produced by the Italian singer and painter Rankin' Alpha, who issued earlier electronic Perry collaboration *Science, Magic, Logic*, and here the backing is largely in organic roots mode, a likeably unfastened platform for Perry's pointed, triple-tracked pronouncements. Babylon Cookie Jar Crumble sees Perry blasting those who serve two gods, Give Thanks To Jah sees Max Romeo and the Reggae Jam festival castigated, and on Who Killed The Chicken, Perry appealed to Walt Disney for help in his war of good against evil. Dubious material crops up in places, most notably on No Cigarette Reggae, though playfulness is mainly the order of the day.

David Katz

Myriam Gendron

★★★★

Ma Délire – Songs Of Love, Lost & Found

FEEDING TUBE. CD/DL/LP

Montreal artist's long-awaited second set of French and English traditional music.

Myriam Gendron's debut LP, 2014's *Not So Deep As A Well*, reworked the poems of New York satirist Dorothy Parker into delicately complex works of voice and guitar that had the haunted DIY whisper of Sibylle Baier and the gauche ethereal innocence of Moe Tucker. With this follow-up she's taken Quebecois folk songs, removed their Catholic imagery, pulling out their romantic longing. Expanding on the first album's guitar-and-vocals skeleton, Gendron adds clarinet, Moog, and harmonium, plus electric guitar atmospherics from Bill Nace and percussion by Chris Corsano. Singing with greater range and depth, Gendron creates a Quebecois folk LP of light and shade that inhabits beauty and heartbreak, secular power and emotional complexity, an album that grows with every play, from merely great to something spectacular.

Andrew Male

ELECTRONIC

BY STEPHEN WORTHY

EERA

★★★★

Speak

JUST DUST. CD/DL/LP

Norwegian's second album adds electronic ice to fiery shoegaze.

Anna Lena Bruland's follow-up to her 2017 debut *Reflection Of Youth* is a reflection instead of growing up: to "speak up and not hold back." To soundtrack her forthrightness, Bruland has built on her formative P.J. Harvey influences with a blurrier, chillier mix of guitars and electronics, landing somewhere bewitching between Broadcast, My Bloody Valentine and Lush. Solid Ground's giddy guitar hook sounds influenced by the Turkish quarter in her current home of Berlin, conjuring up a feeling of vertigo more than solidity; Falling Between The Ice is as giddy as a carousel, but the threat of climate change brings the mood crashing to earth. Unset Truths is more conventionally edgy indie rock, in the vein of Mitski, who shares Bruland's desire to choose her own identity over that which cultural norms and our own insecurities try to pin on us.

Martin Aston

Beverly Glenn-Copeland

★★★★

Keyboard Fantasies Reimagined

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Next phase in the rediscovery of a composer's 1986 record.

Once lost, now very much found, Beverly Glenn-Copeland's 1986 album *Keyboard Fantasies* occupied a bright new place in the world on its 2016 reissue. This collection of remixes and reworkings crystallises some of the links made by its new age synthesizers and ancient folk warmth, with Bon Iver, Flock Of Dimes and Blood Orange among the artists rewiring the Canada-based composer's work. Most radically, Julia Holter gently teases apart Winter Astral fibre by fibre, retitling it Fastest Star and adding words and a spray of *Loveless* noise, while Arca's version of Let Us Dance x-rays the clear-eyed, courageous original to pick up underlying stress and strain. Kelsey Lu, meanwhile, brings out the magic of Glenn-Copeland's cradle-side vocals on Ever New. Despite its fragile origins out on the margins, *Keyboard Fantasies* stands up well to being reimagined, further testament to its inner strengths.

Victoria Segal

Parris

★★★★

Soaked In Indigo Moonlight

CAN YOU FEEL THE SUN. CD/DL/LP

Tottenham producer's debut LP rewires hard electronic minimalism with a pop feel.

Raised on bass culture, grime and techno club nights, Dwayne Parris-Robinson's debut album ricochets between pop coherence and deep experimentation, navigating an idiosyncratic path through modern electronic music that, even in its coldest, hardest moments, is always engrossing. Rhythm is the cornerstone of Parris's art, as he restlessly cuts up breakbeats, shifts drum patterns and drops tempo on a whim – Crimson Kano's interwoven polyrhythms underpin the sound of machines in fierce conversation, while Poison Pudding's complex rhythmic interplay rewrites Gershon Kingsley's Popcorn as spy-thriller soundtrack. A maverick with a taste for the esoteric – check the minimal dub of Frozen Hailstones Underwater, or Movements' wily update of the trip-hop aesthetic – Parris is nevertheless unafraid of hooks or accessibility. As such, lead single Skater's World pits Eden Samara's multitracked melisma against ever-shifting breakbeats, conjuring weightless, deceptively avant-garde pop in the process.

Stevie Chick

Ghost Box unlocked: Martin Jenkins at Pye Audio Corner.

Pye Corner Audio

★★★★

Entangled Routes

GHOST BOX. CD/DL/LP

Final part in a trilogy of albums that started with 2016's *Stasis*.

This fourth outing recorded for Ghost Box and the follow-up to 2019's *Hollow Earth* sees Martin Jenkins, AKA the Head Technician, take the idea of mycorrhiza, the symbiotic relationship between a green plant and a fungus, and apply it to the human race. The result is 13 instrumentals (titles including New Roots, Growth Potential, Symbiosis) built around minimalist synth sequences that are slow-building and tense, with agitated pin-prick rhythms and pulsing stabs evoking a vastness of space and the associated emotional states – from agoraphobia-induced terror to wide-eyed wonder. Jenkins' core influences remain the same: sci-fi fiction, Italo horror soundtracks and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and running parallel throughout is that sense of 'faulty memory' and half recognition – are these lost '70s TV themes? – that is part of the Ghost Box label's fundamental allure.

Lois Wilson

Union Of Knives

★★★

Endless From The Start

THREE HANDS. CD/DL/LP

Scottish electro trio's first album since 2006.

Derailed by record company shenanigans, Union Of Knives took a break after their Atticus Ross-produced second album was shelved, allowing leader Chris Gordon to raise his daughter and, eventually, re-form Baby Chaos. Now joined by American import Anthony Thomaz and artist/drummer Peter Kelly, he's off again. Ladytron's breathy singer Helen Marnie guests on A Tall Tale (where she's strangely under-used) and the more satisfying A Little Life, but Gordon's vision remains intact. Taking their cue from fellow electro Scots Secession and Finitribe as much as from Massive Attack's bruised threat, Union Of Knives clatter with abandon, most notably on the gigantic opener There's A River. The attack is too massive at some points, and when they attempt to shine a little light into the stentorian shade on High On Account Of 0 it doesn't quite work, but as a force of nature, they're unstoppable.

John Aizlewood

Various

★★★★

@0

AHEAD OF OUT TIME. CD/DL/LP

The restorative power of ambient fuels Coldcut-curated introspective journey.

IT WAS 1995 when Coldcut's Matt Black and Jonathan More released their landmark mix album, *Journeys By DJ*. *@0* is a more restrained affair – inspired, say the Ninja Tune founders, by our collective reflection; a three-hour compendium of new recordings matching up contemporary ambient and new classical exponents with long-standing pioneers. Heavyweight contributors include Ryuichi Sakamoto, System 7 and modular synthesizer pioneer Suzanne Ciani, whose Morning Spring swirls, bubbles and enchants, just like that of her erstwhile co-collaborator, Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith, on Mt Baker. The German techno maven Helena Hauff eschews her usual bludgeoning 4/4 for the horror baroque of Thalassa, counterpointed by the womblike atmosphere created by new age veteran Steve Roach on The Drift Home. The album's denouement – a reworked take of Irresistible Force and Coldcut's enduring downtempo staple, Autumn Leaves – is a lip-trembler. Black and More's prowess as selectors remains undiminished, more than a quarter of a century on.

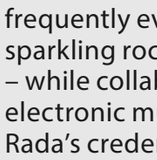
ALSO RELEASED

µ-Ziq & Mrs Jynx

★★★★

Secret Garden

PLANET MU. CD/DL/LP



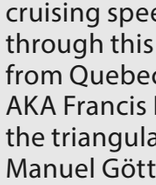
Having both lost parents to cancer, Planet Mu head Mike Paradinas and Hannah Davidson weave a path through shared grief with music that has profoundly meditative and restorative qualities. It's characterised early on by the mournful techno of Loss, but personal progress can be heard later on Hulo, where frenetic, chirruping beats and an effervescent melody hint at brighter times.

Rival Consoles

★★★★

Overflow

ERASED TAPES. CD/DL/LP



Like Alexander Whitley's contemporary dance performance for which it was composed, Overflow's suffocating dark electronica mimics the intensity, repetitiveness and dangers of our interaction with social media. Skirls of noise are layered like mille-feuille, bass drops hit with the muscular impact of a piledriver, and a cloud hangs heavy over the entirety of proceedings.

Sissi Rada

★★★

Nanodiamond

KRYPTOX. DL/LP

Athenian artist Sissi Rada deals in skittish minimalism and gothic synth opuses. Her parallel career as a concert harpist is frequently evident – Athena is a sparkling rocket trip to the stars – while collaborations with electronic music deities bolster Rada's credentials. Joining a brace with Mouse On Mars' Andi Toma, 81948 (2000 OM69) is a blissful digital lullaby co-produced with Brian Eno.

Priori

★★★

Your Own Power

NAFF. CD/DL/LP

Tripped out dub techno jams, glistening ambient and motorik rhythms set at cruising speed percolate through this contemplative work from Quebecois producer, Priori AKA Francis Latreille. It meets at the triangulation point between Manuel Göttsching, Orbital and Basic Channel, with the latter an obvious influence on the dreamy, muted 4/4 thump of Your Own Power. *SW*

Grace Cummings: a high flier's pleas for misfits.

Grace Cummings

★★★★

Storm Queen

ATO. CD/DL/LP

Elemental folk-blues from Melbourne enigma.

ACTOR GRACE Cummings came late to musical performance, visceral 2019 debut *Refuge Cove* crackling with an analogue feel. Now, sound still pared to just acoustic guitar, fiddle and piano, she further unleashes her psyche in a voice of throaty, Diamanda Galas-style intensity. Gritty with outback dust and the scarring of the bushfires, Heaven is glorious and brutal – "Ave Maria!" roars Cummings, in awe of the land's majesty, before spitting: "There is no God…" Freak has the open-heart intensity you'd find in Mary Margaret O'Hara, a survivor's plea for the misfit: "Don't blink your eyes/You don't want to cry/C'mon, freak, and sing!" It's ludicrously moving. Dreams could be a tender Scott Walker tone poem, Up In Flames feels like a lost Dylan track. All raw, usually exquisite. As she sings in Two Little Birds, "What a place to be/Up in the canopy/Fly high."

Glyn Brown

Orquestra Afro-Brasileira

★★★★

80 Anos

DAY DREAMER. DL/LP

First album in 50 years brings superb results.

Formed in 1941 by composer, trombonist, and percussionist Abigail Moura, Orquestra Afro-Brasileira couched intense percussive workouts in big-band jazz arrangements, crafting modernised Candomblé chants and exploring the fractured nature of black Brazilian identity. The group issued only two LPs before Moura's impoverished death in 1970, but thanks to the efforts of Beastie Boys co-producer Mario Caldato Jr, Orquestra Afro-Brasileira has now reformed with the veteran percussionist Carlos Negreiros at the helm for their first release in half a century. From the opening bars of Abertura, it is clear that *80 Anos* is something special, the supreme musicianship expertly captured in a spacious mix that allows us to focus on each instrument, as well as Negreiros' bittersweet vocals. Songs like Lembarenganga and Agô venerate Candomblé deities and there are fine updates of Palmares and Obaluayê, yielding a dignified and inspired release.

David Katz

Gil Gilmour

Aloa Input

★★★★

Devil's Diamond Memory Collection

SILUH. CD/DL/LP

Successfully eclectic look into a possible future.

German trio Aloa Input – Angela Aux, Marcus Grassl and Cico Beck – return with *Devil's Diamond Memory Collection*, their first new album in six years. Recorded across the world in studios, cinemas and basements in Mexico City, Montreal and Munich, the trio ponder what it would be like to be the last person on Earth, facing an AI-dominated future. Aux suggests it is an album that can be listened to in years to come to understand what, in the past, we thought the future may be. The tics and idiosyncrasies running through 2013's *Anysome* and 2015's *Mars Etc* are present and correct: this is tender, inventive, brittle music. The Morricone-influenced Atlas Daze and the gentle Make It Rain are affecting ballads, while the bass-driven motorik of Desert Something sound likes the past futures of clear reference points Can and The Beta Band.

Daryl Easlea

Daniel Casimir

★★★★

Boxed In

JAZZ RE: FRESHED. CD/DL/LP

Rising UK jazz bassist's first solo flight.

Solid and dependable but never too predictable, Casimir's supple bass lines have been the musical bedrock upon which Nubya Garcia has built her success. As well as being a trusted member of the saxophonist's road band, conservatory-trained Casimir has appeared on all of Garcia's recordings. Here she reciprocates in a supporting role on the bassist's debut, which reveals his talents as a writer and arranger. It's an audacious collection featuring strings, brass and singer Ria Moran, whose honeyed tone lights up the tracks New Waters and Get Even. The album's keystone is the haunting Safe, an episodic, three-part piece inspired by writer Derek Owusu's anthology of that name in which essays explore being black, British and male. The album's title, by the way, is an ironic misnomer: Casimir sounds anything but boxed in on this expansive set.

Charles Waring

Hedvig Mollestad

★★★★

Tempest Revisited

RUNE GRAMMOFON. CD/DL/LP

Idisoyncratic Norwegian jazz guitarist reports in on heavy weather.

Tempest Revisited begins calmly with Sun On A Dark Sky, where a shimmering electric piano weaves through saxophone flurries and gauzy guitar. Tension arrives, winds approach and agitated seabirds spiral. A suite reflecting the distinct phases of a storm, this is closer to the band arrangements of Mike Westbrook and Michael Gibbs than the metal-infused wig-outs Norway's Hedvig Mollestad is more normally associated with, though sections are stuffed with her wild guitar. The inspirational springing-off point is storied Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim's 1979 score for a ballet interpretation of Shakespeare's The Tempest, performed in Mollestad's home town of Ålesund in 1998. On the 20th anniversary of that recital, she was approached to create a new work – *Tempest Revisited*. While Mollestad is at her most formal, this album's power and deep cultural roots bring a resonance akin to that of the work of Nordheim.

Kieron Tyler

The Professionals

★★★

SNAFU

JTP. CD/DL/LP

Another campaign from the Sex Pistols' Paul Cook and co.

An on-off concern since Cook and fellow Pistol Steve Jones first mobilised them in '79, The Professionals are currently sans Jones, but with input from a slew of guest guitarists including Billy Duffy (The Cult) and Phil Collen (Def Leppard), *SNAFU*'s trashy pop-punk doesn't want for verve and vitality. Pondering anarchy's viability from a mellower place ("Grown out of anger and OD'd on luck," sings frontman Tom Spencer on Punk Rock And A Hard Place), and detailing Cook's accidental spiking after consuming his daughter's hash cookies, it's a mostly light-hearted affair channelling irreverence and spontaneity into a self-aware whole. If things start to sound a little formulaic by Never Say Never's bolted-on chorus, there's a winning, Joan Jett-like immediacy to M'Ashes and the Eddie Cochran-indebted Heartburn, Spencer's voice on the latter recalling Joe Strummer.

James McNair

Youth

★★★★

Spinning Wheel

YOUTH SOUNDS/CADIZ ENTERTAINMENT. CD/DL/LP

First solo outing by producer and Killing Joke co-founder.

Youth's self-penned and produced solo debut was recorded in Spain and London with Youth also singing and playing bass, guitar and keyboards. His voice surprises: a Jason Pierce-like fragile quaver – the Killing Joke bassist was set to produce Spiritualized's eighth album in 2015 but had an acrimonious falling out with Pierce. Like Pierce, Youth's songs deal in grand emotions, but are sparsely delivered, augmented on occasion by fiddle from Jerry Driver (the quiet swelling folk of Wooden Floor; Close My Eyes, the cloud-bursting climax) and viola, again by Driver, on the VU-styled Pure. Other influences include Fred Neil (a haunting Hear The Dolphins) and '70s bubblegum, Youth's first musical love imprinted on Sha La Laa I Love You, an excitable pop explosion.

Lois Wilson

Bedouine

★★★

Waysides

THE ORCHARD. CD/DL/LP

Los Angeleno's third set of smooth folk-pop is enlivened by lyrical edge.

Azniv Korkejian's third album as Bedouine collects a number of unreleased older songs the singer/songwriter has polished and completed over the last year or so. The remarkably unhurried, hermetic vibe of her intimate chamber-folk remains unchanged – and, as with her earlier albums, the subtle humour and tension in the lyrics give her songs a much-needed charge, rescuing them from a cloying sweetness. Korkejian writes about relationships with insight and wit, opener The Solitude deftly underplaying the narrator's yearning for an absent lover – protesting "for the most part I'm unchanged" in the same breath that she's rueing "too many pillows, too big a bed" – while Easy's bittersweet meditation on love's slow decay evades cliché and locates some sad truths along the way. This lyrical edge proves crucial – a closing cover of Christine McVie's Songbird, played entirely straight, is as pointless as it is pretty, and a little dull.

Stevie Chick

Ben LaMar Gay

★★★★

Open Arms To Open Us

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Second LP by 'postmodern folklorist' puts Chicagoan's eclectic sensibilities to fore.

It may have been inspired by childhood summers on his Aunt Lola's Alabama farm but there's nothing parochial about the sequel to 2018's *Downtown Castles Can Never Block The Sun*. As on that debut – seven unreleased albums condensed into one – this 16-tracker veers all over the stylistic map. While wobbly off-kilter highlights Bang Melodically Bang and Oh Great Be The Lake nod, atmospherically, to Steve Reich, Tom Waits and Prince, Gay's restless broken beats and sozzled-sounding cornet beautifully offset throaty Rwanda-born singer Dorothée Munyaneza (Nyuzura) and shredding cellist Tomeka Reid (In Tongues And In Droves). A polychromatic affair that zaps between skewed soul, wobbly electronics, progressive jazz and baile funk, the whole of *Open Arms…* is much larger than the sum of its parts.

Andy Cowan

Smile

★★★★

Phantom Island

CHIMP LIMBS. CD/DL/LP

Very satisfying second LP from Joakim Åhlund and Björn of Peter, Bjorn & John.

Like every movement that conquers the mainstream, Scandi-pop has its more intriguing underground tangents, hence Smile. The duo's second album and their first since 2012, has fun with that mainstream, so there's a track called Kylie, another titled after Roxette's Dressed For Success ("tiger beef and owl tranquillisers" indeed), and Robyn turns in a stellar vocal performance on Call My Name. In the main, though, Smile offer a more subversive, mostly instrumental pleasure. Incorporating elements of Faust-like Krautrock, although the roller-coaster instrumental that is Kylie keeps threatening to break into Mike Oldfield's Exorcist theme. Cleverly, they leaven Krautrock's potential metronomic harshness, with a warmer, more inclusive approach, akin to Giorgio Moroder's groundbreaking work with Sparks. Primal Scream's Andrew Innes adds guitar twang to Landsort and Kattens Pyjamas, while the languid title track brings things to a dreamy close.

John Aizlewood

Penny Rimbaud And Youth

★★★

Corpus Mei

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. CD/DL/LP

Disgruntled sermons meet vivid orchestral backings as hirsute punk survivors link.

Recorded in 2011, this deeply textured partnership between the ex-Crass lyricist and Killing Joke's bassist has lost none of its political acuity. A lulling riff on Somewhere Over The Rainbow is the calm before the storm, Penny Rimbaud's rich, crystalline voice launching a spittle-strewn attack on the "blood spattered corridors of absolute power" (Mammon's Minions) with added ballast from Crass co-conspirator Eve Libertine. We are clearly not in Kansas anymore. Rimbaud's righteous ire softens on the epic You Brave Old Land, sounding as proud and indomitable as the landscape Youth evokes via Kate Shortt and Isabella Kolaczynska's gladdening strings. As with the jazz stylings of 2017's *What Passing Bells (The War Poems Of Wilfred Owen)* and 2020's *Arthur Rimbaud In Verdun*, Rimbaud's free-thinking intensity may be too much for some, but immersion repays many times over.

Andy Cowan

Sam Evian

★★★

Time To Melt

FAT POSSUM. CD/DL/LP

Third long-player from the former Sam Owens.

Having fled New York for the relative tranquillity of the Catskills after recording 2018's *You, Forever* there, Sam Evian immersed himself in slowly assembling *Time To Melt*. Evian's fey vocals glide above understated, dream-like backgrounds taken from over 60 instrumental demos, but the title track is so sonically warped Joe Meek could have produced it. Just when it seems as though it's too abstract and ethereal to take hold, Evian snatches victory from the jaws of lightweight defeat with his beguiling songwriting, hence Sunshine's irresistible Scritti Politti-style chorus, while Lonely Days chugs along like …And The Native Hipsters and urgent brass propels the exuberant Easy To Love. Strangest comes last with Around It Goes, where Evian's saxophone wraps itself around a drum machine's beats while the vocals are selected from messages sent to Evian's Instagram account. Out there, but inclusive too.

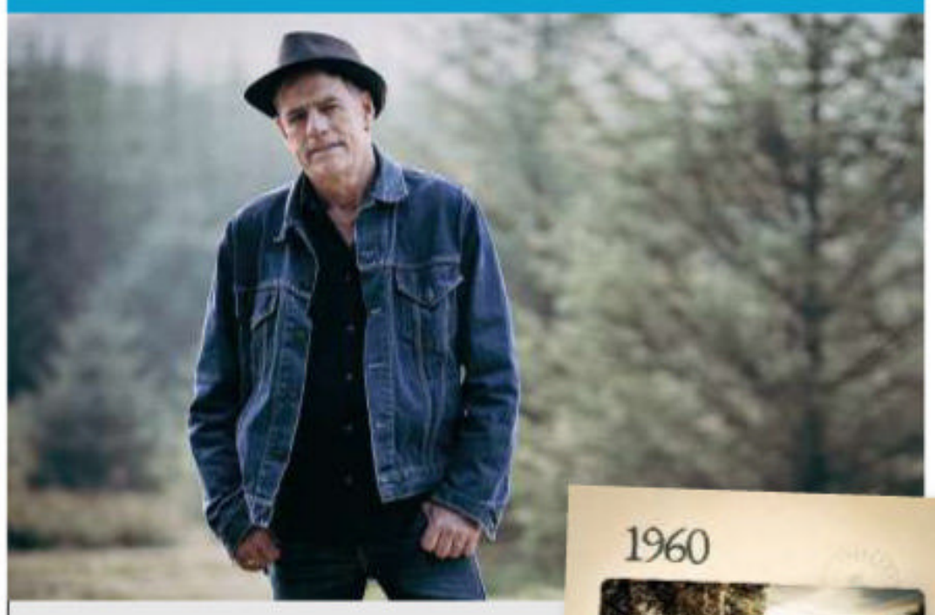
John Aizlewood

Alejandro Ayala,, Jolyon Holroyd

Ben LaMar Gay: welcoming with open arms.

FOLK

BY COLIN IRWIN



Martyn Joseph

★★★★

1960

PIPE. CD/DL

Self-searching reflections from an old school troubadour reflecting on his sixth decade.

GREETING A significant birthday as an invitation to take stock of all that's gone before and how it could all have been different is hardly an original concept, but Martyn Joseph's trawl through his past darkly has injected refreshed magic into his songwriting. There's plenty of self-doubt ("I'm not effortless, I'm not cool, not a day goes by when I don't feel a fool," he sings on Trying To Grow); Born Too Late speaks of Joni Mitchell, Art Garfunkel, Josephine Baker and opportunities missed; and Shadow Boxing paints poignant pictures of childhood and a father fading with Alzheimer's. Yet none of it is maudlin or self-pitying – Joseph is far too canny for that, delivering engaging melodies with rugged intensity. This 23rd studio album in a career spanning four decades carries genuine emotional clout alongside its nostalgic observations and must count as one of his best.

ALSO RELEASED

Emily Scott Robinson

★★★★

American Siren

OH BOY. CD/DL

A vividly melancholic Colorado singer-songwriter, Robinson's winsome story songs straddle folk and Americana with a purity that eradicates any hint of tweeness. Awash with random characters and wry observations, her narratives and a persuasive way with a chorus often call to mind Iris Dement, while her best songs – cinematic anthem Lost Woman's Prayer and highly charged Every Day In Faith – sound like well-established country classics. .

Mishra

★★★

Reclaim

SHEDBUILT. CD/DL

You worry about the pretentiousness potential of a band describing themselves as a "global folk collective" but it's impossible to question the clawhammer banjo and dobro skills of Kate Griffin, the guitar, whistle and percussion of Ford Collier, or indeed, the compelling tune-making at the heart of Mishra. The global bit manifests via multiple influences, from Indian classical to Americana and Celtic jiggery, with earnest glances to the natural world and ethereal harmony vocals raising the emotional ante.

Louis De Bernières

★★★

Despatches

KHAKI ANGEL. CD/DL

Famed author he may be, but music – folk songwriters in particular, apparently – has always been at his core and this is a double album made with relish and passion. Bernières' jagged voice cuts through darkly arresting vignettes full of evocative lyrics, assisted by telling contributions from Beth Porter, Selina Hawker and David Booth. Powerful stuff, though Leonard Cohen especially seems to have been such an overwhelming influence it often sounds like an adoring homage.

Good Habits

★★★

Antipody

BANDCAMP. CD/DL

Manchester-based duo of singer/cellist Bonnie Schwarz and accordionist/cajon player Pete Shaw – were on tour in Covid-free New Zealand when the rest of the world was paralysed by the pandemic. Naturally they stayed exactly where they were for the rest of the year and recorded this appealing album. Driven by Schwarz's jazz-inflected voice and the unusual combination of instruments, it wields an uplifting sense of adventure, as underlined by their imaginative re-invention of The Stone Roses' She Bangs The Drums. *CI*

FILTER ALBUMS

Converge: gory gothic conjuring unquiet storms.

Converge

★★★★

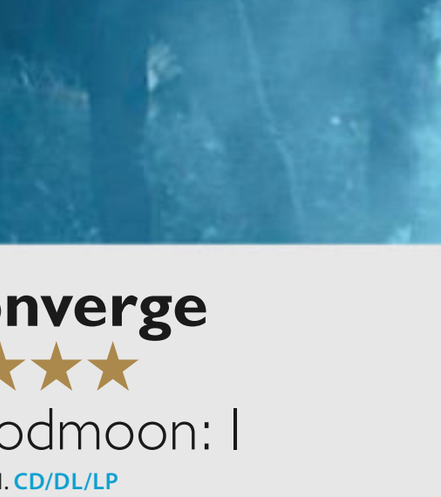
Bloodmoon: I

EPITAPH. CD/DL/LP

Chelsea Wolfe and Cave-In's Stephen Brodsky assist in majestic set of gory gothic rock.

MASSACHUSETTS hardcore stalwarts who typically sound like a pack of feral dogs devouring an unfortunate passer-by, Converge's latest pairs them with gothic angel of death Chelsea Wolfe and Stephen Brodsky of emo-proggers Cave-In. Five years in the making, the result is that rarest of beasts, a collaboration where each sulphurous element perfectly complements the others. Brodsky's symphonic, psychedelic touch anchors the grandiose grind of Coil, the majestic, glacial doom of Flower Moon and the unsettling Daimon (its chilling chorus, "Bones crawled out of their bodies", evoking Alice In Chains at their most macabre). Wolfe, meanwhile, proves the perfect counterpoint for Converge frontman Jacob Bannon's wounded howl, her icy croon often at the heart of each track's unquiet storm. The sophistication of their gory, gothic art impresses throughout, inchoate thrash, black-hearted psychedelia and graveyard dramas conjuring a whole that is mightier than its parts.

Stevie Chick



HOO

★★★

We Shall Never Speak

BIG POTATO. CD/DL/LP

Innovations in electronic folk shoegaze; line-up now has Slowdive's Neil Halstead.

Expanded from the duo that gave us the psych-drone-dreampop of 2019 debut *Centipede Wisdom*, HOO now includes guitarist Neil Halstead, folkie Jackie Oates and Beach-wood Sparks' weird-beard Farmer Dave Scher alongside the project's singular constant, Nick Holton. All the former HOO hallmarks remain intact: vintage-sounding synths, motorik beats (if there are any at all) and a decidedly post-rock approach to composition. *We Shall Never Speak*, however, comes with added song structure (although still little in the way of conventional choruses), space age squiggles, hazy vocals and the occasional Europop keyboard riff. And it works, albeit in some very mysterious ways, hypnotically drawing you into its shimmering, pearlescent textures as '50s sci-fi meets peak Reading shoegaze. Dislocating and somehow always just out of reach, it's an ideal soundtrack for the new normal.

Andy Fyfe

Marconi Union

★★★

Signals

JUST MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Enigmatic ambient experimentalists' homage to the beat masters.

There's something of the contrarian – albeit of the more mild-mannered sort – about Marconi Union. The Manchester trio's previous album, 2019's *Dead Air*, chiefly eschewed beats in favour of ruminative, windswept ambient. By contrast, *Signals* is inspired by their favourite drummers (think Jaki Liebezeit, Tony Allen) and thus results in a distinct rise in tempo. Cycles Repeat, for example, lays down a trademark, economical Allen-like groove, over which they fold layers of delay-laden, arpeggiated guitar and pulsing, distorted voices. A motorik rhythm scuttles along Strata, in what must be one of MU's funkiest moments in their 18-year recording career, but the closing Looking Through The Ilex is a return to type, of sorts, pitter-patter percussion married to church organ drone. Despite the BPM boost, Marconi Union still want to wrap you in a warm, sonic blanket, balancing the synthetic and organic.

Stephen Worthy

Emily Birds

Richard Fearless

★★★★

Future Rave Memory

DRONE. DL/LP

Mammoth, overwhelming sonic depiction of London's darker corners.

London has provided artistic inspiration to many, but few evocations of its life can have felt quite as visceral, tormented and starkly beautiful as that created by Richard Fearless here. A darker, sinister counterpart to *Deep Rave Memory*, the ex-Death In Vegas man's 2019 album of sublimely wonky techno, Fearless summons the spectres of the capital's industrial past and muses on its latter-day inequities using weapons-grade drone, saturnine ambient and glacial-pace acid. Recorded in his east London studio, overlooked by the glowering Canary Wharf, it's bookended by two mighty slabs of music. The hulking 13-minute opener, Tamas, is a rumbling vessel seemingly inhabited by ghostly echoes of the past, human and industrial. The closer, Our Acid House, is two minutes longer still. A transmission from a haunted warehouse party, it thrums with the raw energy that fuels Fearless's indomitable hometown.

Stephen Worthy

The KVB

★★★★

Unity

INVADA. CD/DL/LP

Coming of age seventh album produced by Andy Savours (The Horrors, MBV).

Inspired by half-built luxury villas in Spain, where this follow-up to 2016's *Of Desire* was written in early 2019, and Le Corbusier's brutalist Unité d'Habitation from which the album's legend is taken, the self-styled audio-visual duo explore the concept of 'ideal living' over 10 tracks creating sound utopias/dystopias that are immersive and entrancing and not unlike something the Ghost Box label might put out. The track Unité is one of several hypnotic highpoints. "Reconstruction of the nation… future concrete occupation… modular factory living," Kat Day deadpans over a monophonic rhythmic pulse. Another standout is Unbound, on which golden guitar lines and washes of synths come together in euphoric climax, Day and partner Nicholas Wood's haunting vocals adding a sense of wonderment throughout.

Lois Wilson

Andrew Gabbard

★★★

Homemade

COLEMINE/KARMA CHIEF. CD/DL/LP

Solo debut for sometime Black Keys guitarist.

If you were looking for a blast of scuzzy garage blues to match Andrew Gabbard's part-time role as touring guitarist for The Black Keys, you'll be sorely disappointed by his solo debut album. Instead, he takes a magic mushroom carpet ride through a world that recalls The Beach Boys, the Everlys and Teenage Fanclub's gentlest moments, or on the slightly lysergic '60s lilt of Mrs Fitz, a lost late Zombies single. His hazy vocals drift above his own multitracked, pillow-soft backing vocals, gently riding cymbals and the kind of piano you'll find on Nilsson albums. That the final track is an exquisitely constructed cover of cult multi-instrumentalist Emitt Rhodes' Promises I've Made is no accident, ultimately pointing most directly to where Gabbard's solo muse lies.

Andy Fyfe

Lionlimb

★★★★

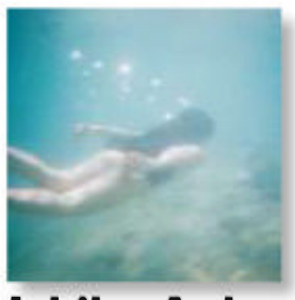
Spiral Groove

BAYONET. DL/LP/MC

Angel Olsen's bandmates' second album of irresistibly forlorn yacht rock.

Nashville guitarist Stewart 'Lionlimb' Bronaugh abandoned music early on to work as a labourer. Drug addiction is part of Bronaugh's backstory, but he turned things around after meeting drummer Joshua Jaeger and both found work backing Angel Olsen and resuscitating Lionlimb as a duo. Like Olsen, they favour '80s synths and lush sound laced with uneasy tension for their own haunted blend of AOR, soft rock and white soul. That tension derives from the way Bronaugh's pale vocal (shades of Elliott Smith here) can sound detached from, or lost inside, the music's richly cushioned folds. The title *Spiral Groove* gives little away, but Bronaugh's lyrics reveal a set of love songs full of vulnerability and regret but also hope. A gliding Everyday says it best: "I'm fallin' down to your floor/But I'm not afraid any more."

Martin Aston



Ichiko Aoba
★★★★
Windswept Adan
BA DA BING. DL/LP
Seventh LP from Japanese composer/guitarist evokes a serene aquatic world. Strains of Satie and Glass in her elegant guitar arpeggios and the sparse orchestrations. Aoba's hushed voice makes for an immersive meld of indie-folk, classical and jazz. *AC*

Mario Batkovic
★★★★
Introspectio
INVADA. CD/DL/LP
The Bosnian/Swiss accordion player's third. Collaborators including James Holden, Clive Deamer and Berlin's choir Cantus Domus broaden his sound with electronics and jazz beats: on unaccompanied tracks, his deep-tomb drones and cathartic paroxysms blaze. *IH*

Betamax Vs Clive Bell
★★★★
Betamax Vs Clive Bell
BYRD OUT. DL/LP
Father/son adventure finds its cosmic jazz outliers (The Comet Is Coming's drummer/rare reeds free-improviser) merging hurtling beats with warped loops and drones over depth-charged dub and otherworldly folk. *AC*

Ben Chasny
★★★★
The Intimate Landscape
DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP
Recorded for library music label KPM, 12 solo guitar pieces conjure spatial evocations of titles such as Waterfall Path or the comet-tail fade of Star Cascade, played on lyrical acoustic with occasional judicious use of effects. *JB*

Kahil El'Zabar Quartet
★★★★
A Time For Healing
SPIRITMUSE. CD/DL/LP
Chicago's spiritual jazz man's second double in a year. A partial showcase for sax man Isaiah Collier, his Resolution (central theme of Coltrane's A Love Supreme) and electrified tribute to Eddie Harris offset by El'Zabar's percussion. *AC*

Mike Etten
★★★
Love Wash
DULL TOOLS. CD/DL/LP
Belying its Spinal Tap-ish title, this solo debut for Etten – a veteran of several Brooklyn bands – brims with heartfelt intensity. Its best country-folk songs come dappled with drones and psychedelic layers to unpeel, sounding lushest on Across The Flats. *JB*

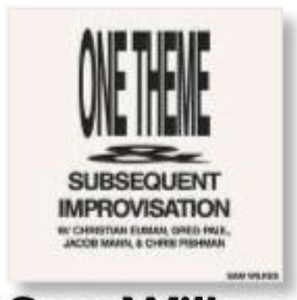
Figure Of Speech
★★★★
Figure Of Speech?
B-BLOCK MUSIC. DL/LP
Any potential dryness to this Manchester rapper's poetic accounts of everyday UK racism is alleviated by Bristol DJ Boca 45's kaleidoscopic beat-juggling. His shifting mix of boom bap, soul, funk and turntablist left-turns sparkles with old school charm. *AC*

Jessica Moss
★★★★
Phosphenes
CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP
Thee Silver Mt Zion violinist's third album of immersive solo composition. Side one's three-part suite, Contemplation, moves at a naturalistic, semi-ambient glide, while side two takes a darker turn, imposing and impressionistic, with Middle Eastern inflections. *JB*

ONETWOTHREE
★★★
ONETWOTHREE
KILL ROCK STARS. CD/DL/LP
Supergroup trio Klaudia Schifferle, Madlaina Peer and Sara Schaer all have form as bassists in Swiss post-punk bands. Together, they make lithe, danceable funk-punk. Highlights: The Le Tigre snap of Perfect Illusions; the Sonic Youth instro vibe on Oh Boy. *JB*

Dan Sartain
★★★★
Arise, Dan Sartain, Arise
ONE LITTLE INDIAN. CD/DL/LP
Sartain's joyful refraction of garage, punk and rock'n'roll through songwriter-ly nous gains added poignancy on his final recording. Rockabilly rumble (Fire & Floods) and Ramones-level melodic brio (I Don't Care) to cherish. *JB*

Various
★★★
Heavenly Remixes 1&2
HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP
Since its beginnings in 1990, Heavenly have commissioned countless remixes of their diverse roster, from Doves to Working Men's Club. Now collected on two volumes, *2*'s '90s highlight: Monkey Mafia's breakbeat bostin' mix of Saint Etienne's Filthy. *CL*



Sam Wilkes
★★★
One Theme & Subsequent Improvisation
LEAVING. CD/DL/LP/MC
LA jazz bassist riffs off an eight-bar harmonic passage then dissolves it into more playful forms, digging deep into the textured percussion and layered keys of guests. *AC*

EXTENDED PLAY

Burn It Clean

Architects of the 'Dunedin sound', The Clean's earliest recordings – the 1981 7-inch Tally Ho b/w Platypus; the same year's five-track EP Boodle Boodle Boodle – are reissued on vinyl to mark their 40th anniversary. Originally released by totemic New Zealand label Flying Nun, these remastered vinyl versions in replica sleeves (overseen by the trio's David Kilgour and Robert Scott) are on US indie Merge, the North Carolina label founded by Superchunk on the axis that connects '80s NZ pop-psych with their own joyously scuzzy output. Despite its raw recording – made during a mid-tour stop-off in Christchurch for just NZ$60 – Tally Ho's carnivalesque organ riff (played by The Chills' Martin Phillips) and urgent, motorik propulsion sent it into the NZ Top 20, while Boodle Boodle Boodle (produced by Dunedin scene guru Chris Knox) went to Number 5 and stayed in the charts for six months. The Boodle 12-inch adds a replica 'zine from the original pressing.

Playground Twist

An 11-CD/18-LP box covers Bowie's five '90s albums: among the extras the unissued *Toy*. By **Jon Savage**.

David Bowie

★★★★

Brilliant Adventure [1992-2011]

PARLOPHONE/ISO. CD/LP

IN WHICH David Bowie sloughs off Tin Machine and his late-'80s despond, while facing the onset of middle age and reversing into the future. Covering the years during which he was contracted to Victory/Savage (1990-1993) and BMG/Virgin (1995-1999), *Brilliant Adventure* comprises the five albums Bowie released in the 1990s plus a June 2000 live concert recorded for the BBC, 3-CDs of contemporary singles/mixes and outtakes, and a complete disc of the cancelled *Toy* album (a further *Toy:Box* is scheduled for January).

In January 1992, Bowie turned 45: in late April, he married Iman Abdulmajid. He canned Tin Machine and went back to work on a solo album with Nile Rodgers. Released in March 1993, *Black Tie White Noise* took over a year to record and, at times, it sounds it. Mixing celebrations of his wedding with covers (Cream's I Feel Free and The Walker Brothers' Nite Flights) and ambitious new material (Pallas Athena), it's a partially successful attempt to integrate Bowie's past with his present which hit the market head on, reaching UK Number 1 in spring 1993.

Bowie was often best when knocking records out rather than trying to make a grand statement. The soundtrack to the TV series of Hanif Kureishi's Buddha Of Suburbia, released at the end of 1993, is an unexpected highlight: recorded in six days, the 10 tracks see more hints of Bowie's past – the title track has a swift burst of Space Oddity and the "zane zane zane" phrase from All The Madmen – while continuing his experiments with cut-ups and deep ambience, as in the exquisite shroud of The Mysteries, one of his great works.

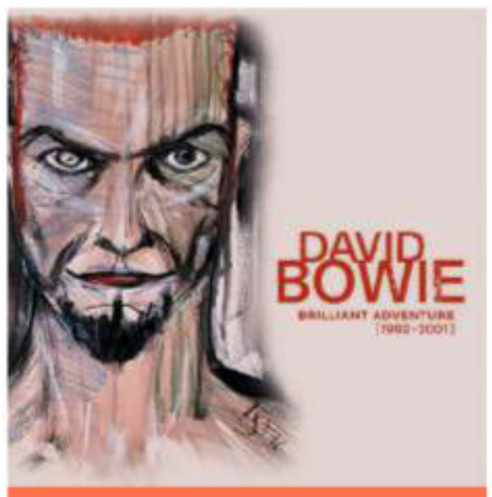
BACK STORY: THE *OTHER* GREAT LOST BOWIE ALBUM

● During 1994 Bowie reconnected with Brian Eno and began work on what have been called the Leon Suites – over an hour's worth of music that fed into September 1995's *1.Outside*. Three Leon suites appeared on the internet in 2015: Suite 1: I Am With Name, Suite 2: Leon Takes Us Outside, and Suite 3: Enemy Is Fragile (27:37). Some of this material ended up in *1.Outside* in 1995, in particular the opening Leon Takes Us Outside.

A dizzying cut-up of character and narrative, *1.Outside* (September 1995, UK Number 8) is an ambitious cyberpunk song cycle – an experimental noir dystopia. Strong songs like The Hearts Filthy Lesson, I Have Not Been To Oxford Town and We Prick You are interspersed with disturbing interludes like Baby Grace (A Horrid Cassette), providing a welcome flexibility of beat and pace, and a return to mainstream pop with the Top 20 single Hello Spaceboy – another return to Space Oddity via the consummate androgyny of Rebel Rebel.

In 1995, Bowie toured *1.Outside* with long-standing collaborator Reeves Gabrels and new recruit Gail Ann Dorsey on bass. Recorded quickly after the previous record's prolonged genesis, with a new co-producer, Mark Plati, 1997's *Earthling* was an energised record that sought to fuse contemporary electronica (industrial, drum'n'bass, techno) with hard rock/Britpop and grunge. Bowie's first album to fully use digital recording, and a UK Number 4, *Earthling* is one gigantic cut-up, and all the better for it.

With its slashing rock chords, electronic squeals and skittering breakbeats, opener Little Wonder sets the mood: fast, distorted, forms rapidly mutating under the pressure of time, space and the Bowie threshing machine. Featuring highlights like Battle For Britain (The Letter), Seven Years In Tibet (revisiting past Buddhist fascinations with slamming interludes) and a spiralling, galloping Dead Man Walking, *Earthling* was initially dismissed as tragic bandwagon-jumping but now plays like Bowie's best album of the decade.



"Bowie was often at his best when knocking records out."

He hadn't given up on a sequel to *1.Outside*, but the idea languished. Lacking an overarching project, Bowie flitted between media in the later 1990s – acting in a couple of films, launching his website BowieNet, and scoring the video game Omikron: The Nomad Soul. The album he eventually released in October 1999, *hours...* was a mixture of projects: the remains of *1.Outside*, an aborted Reeves Gabrels solo album, and the music for Omikron.

Released two years after Bowie had turned 50, *hours...* (UK Number 5) is a strange record, mostly muted and introspective, overly 'adult' in its sound, with any experimental traces overlaid with buffed and polished mid-paced rock. Like all of his '90s records, it harks back to Bowie's past: the intimate, acoustic Seven rebuts the apocalypsism of Five Years, while the uptempo The Pretty Things Are Going To Hell references Iggy, The Pretty Things and, again, Rebel Rebel. It was his last collaboration with Reeves Gabrels.

At the turn of the millennium, Bowie revisited his past in earnest. Asked to headline Glastonbury in June 2000, he returned for his first greatest hits set since the Sound + Vision tour of 1990 – after which he had agreed to retire his back catalogue. Recorded nine days later, the BBC/London set features efficient versions of material as disparate as The London Boys, All The Young Dudes, Let's Dance, Ashes To Ashes, Little Wonder, Seven, and, post-Nirvana, The Man Who Sold The World.

With his next project, *Toy*, he dived right in. Rather than record other people's songs from the mid to late '60s, as he'd done with *Pin-Ups*, he'd revisit the obscurities in his own catalogue. Released officially for the first time – a 14-track version was leaked online in 2011 – *Toy*'s 12 tracks span his 1965 Parlophone single You've Got A Habit Of Leaving, to 1971's The Shadow Man. As an example of an artist revisiting – and perhaps, reclaiming – his past, it's a fascinating but patchy experiment. The early songs were totally unsuccessful, yet had distinct charms: the dive-bombing Who guitar of You've Got A Habit Of Leaving, the Mod snap of I Dig Everything, the muted desolation of The London Boys. The *Toy* versions put the material through the late period Bowie mincer: they are well played, on occasion moving (Conversation Piece; Baby Loves That Way), but the callowness of the original lyrics sit oddly next to his mature vocals and the slick musical stylings.

When EMI/Virgin balked at releasing *Toy*, Bowie bailed and signed with Columbia/ISO, a phase yet to be explored. The final three discs mop up single B sides, remixes, original Omikron tracks, strays like the Ice Storm film version of I Can't Read and a collaboration with Angelo Badalamenti, A Foggy Day In London Town, plus a sharp live reworking of The Man Who Sold The World. It ends with a *Pin-Ups* style cover of The Who's Pictures Of Lily.

As ever with such boxes, there are omissions: the 1994 'Leon Suite' sessions with Brian Eno that were the seed bed of *1.Outside*. *Toy* is the main bait for unissued material (most of the 2000 BBC concert has had limited release); but the haphazard, yet instinctive progress of a major artist through his fourth and fifth decade is fascinating as he falls in and out of favour while summoning the endurance necessary for survival. It's a daunting but ultimately rewarding listen.

Outside man comes inside: David Bowie, still progressing through the ’90s.

Magical ride: The Waterboys, enjoying all the fun of the fair.

Roots manoeuvre

Five-CD exploration of Mike Scott's Irish Adventure, Part Two. By **Tom Doyle**.

The Waterboys

★★★★

The Magnificent Seven

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL/LP

WILFULLY OUT of step with the times, Mike Scott spent the late 1980s digging deeper and deeper to get to the roots. *Fisherman's Blues*, released in '88 at the height of acid house, was the first phase of his Irish sojourn and journey into the folk traditions. Despite that LP involving a pool of over 100 songs and 374 reels of used-up tape, Scott's instinct was to go further.

As a companion to 2013's similarly expansive *Fisherman's Box*, the next chapter in his story is told here in 102 tracks (plus a book featuring a 50,000-word Scott essay, available standalone or with the super deluxe edition), through live recordings, demos, pub lock-in sessions and rough mixes. The resulting album, 1990's smoothly-produced *Room To Roam*, also included here, originally paled in comparison to its predecessor and still seems a touch wan. But the many steps that Scott and the band took leading up to its making tell a fascinating tale.

The Magnificent Seven of the title are the expanded Waterboys line-up that by this point featured masterful accordion/fiddle-player Sharon Shannon alongside time-served multi-instrumentalists Anto Thistlethwaite and Steve Wickham. Shannon first appears here fronting a series of reels recorded at the Winkles Hotel in Kinvara, accompanied by impressively nifty bodhran-playing from Scott. Given these trad roots, though, 12 tracks later on the first disc the assembled septet are exploring hypnotic drone in the shape of the 10-minute-long Three Ships.

Redolent of the era, the Thatcher-directed Maggie (It's Time For You To Go), from the Majestic Ballroom in Mallow, June 1989, is more pointedly playful ("Now lately you've been sounding kinda crazy") than Elvis Costello's similarly-focused Tramp The Dirt Down. It's one of many live offerings selected from the pile of mixer board DATs pictured in the sleevenotes. Some show their age, such as the Celtic reggae cover of The Saw Doctors' The Streets Of Galway, which conjures up visions of new age travellers peddling "black 'ash" at festivals. Elsewhere, though, there are real gems, such as the band throwing themselves at Dylan's New Morning at the Orpheum Theatre in Boston. Scott sounds utterly exhilarated.

It's interesting to track the development of some of the songs here. Something That Is Gone moves from a Walkman-recorded a cappella idea sung in the shower at the Hyatt on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, through a delicate band demo, to the dreamy, almost '75 Bowie-ish version on the album. Others benefit from the lo-fi treatment – the tape-wobbly, degraded demo of Bigger Picture is way more atmospheric than the master.

And so, even if it culminated in a middling album, *The Magnificent Seven* now exists as a vivid portrait of the *Room To Roam* era, illuminating the 1989-90 Waterboys from new and revealing angles.

Various

★★★★

Fire Draw Near

RIVER LEA. CD/DL

Lankum man trawls archives for *An Anthology Of Irish Traditional Song And Music*.

He's often branded as an unreconstituted ex-punk in folk circles, but Ian Lynch's traditional credentials run deep, from a masters degree in Irish folklore to lectures at University College and regular podcasts. There's no shortage of archive material available courtesy of the sainted Reg Hall, but it's 23 years since Topic's landmark *Voice Of The People* series and Lynch's profile with Lankum – and his passion for the subject – ought to fire new imaginations. With rare recordings from the last 70 years, it captures the informality and relaxed joy of music made in its natural habitat. Nora Cleary giggles as she sings The Codfish, Grace Toland's beautiful singing of Flora comes with a hubbub of background conversation and Joe Heaney has a bit of a chat before singing Amhrán Na Heascainne. All this and perhaps the greatest piper of all, Johnny Doran. A gem.

Colin Irwin

The Black Keys

★★★★

El Camino [Deluxe Edition]

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Commercially chiselled seventh LP, plus grittier live/session extras.

Dan Auerbach isn't overly fond of this Danger Mouse-drilled album that broke The Black Keys in the US: he prefers things greasy, *à la* this year's *Delta Kream*. Also, *El Camino*'s global outreach almost consumed him. The record itself, however, feels positively filthy by today's pop standards, and 10 years on, most classic rock aficionados would take guitar-powered earworms like Lonely Boy and Gold On The Ceiling in a heartbeat. This deluxe version adds a 20-track live blitzkrieg from Portland, Maine in March 2012, at the start of the arena trajectory that eroded Auerbach's soul – yet is still a textbook document of a fabulously exciting, peaking band. Even better, an 11-song live-with-audience BBC session, plus a further nine live-in-studio entries from LA's Electro-Vox facility, bottle that energy with more kinetic frisson, bringing *El Camino*'s crossover bangers into alignment with Fat Possum-era garage blasts such as Your Touch.

Andrew Perry

The Jazz Butcher

★★★★

Dr Cholmondley Repents: A-sides, B-sides And Seasides

FIRE. CD/ DL

A beautiful elegy in the wake of Pat Fish's untimely death in October.

From the outset, The Jazz Butcher viewed singles as separate entities, a place where Pat Fish's most oddball impulses could coexist with his innate melodic sense. First single and its flip, Southern Mark Smith and Jazz Butcher Meets Count Dracula, are perfect examples: the first inspired by a forgotten pub joke about Blue Aeroplanes' Gerard Langley; the second from a dream Fish had about watching Dracula on TV with the Count himself. Musical allies, meanwhile, include Jonathan Richman – they do a great Roadrunner – and Robert Wyatt, who said, "Anyone can make avant-garde records but it takes a genius to write a pop song." As The Jazz Butcher, Pat Fish combined both, as this wonderful box of singles, flip sides and more attests.

Lois Wilson

Vis-A-Vis

★★★★

Best Of Vis-A-Vis In Congo Style

WE ARE BUSY BODIES. DL/LP

Ghanaians' 1976 LP. Also out: 1977's *Di Wo Ho Ni*.

Vis-A-Vis's vision was bold, and over 13 albums in their 1975-82 lifespan they took highlife in new directions, fusing it with Congolese rumba to thrilling effect on this, their third LP. By this time, rumba based on the Hispanic style of son cubano was dominating the African dancehalls; its rhythms were infectious, and the album sparks with a street energy and the promise of change via dancefloor communion. Key tracks: Medofo Pa and Cherie Bondowe, the latter an exultant reading of the Congolese guitarist/singer songwriter Freddy Mayaula Mayoni's hit from the previous year; the former, percussive cross rhythms with Isaac Yeboah's soulful voice and the guitar of Sammy Red Cropper.

Lois Wilson

Bola Sete

★★★★

Samba In Seattle

TOMPKINS SQUARE. CD/DL

The great Brazilian guitarist, live at the Penthouse jazz club, 1966-68.

A veteran of Dizzy Gillespie and then Vince Guaraldi's bands, Bola Sete had recently formed his own trio (with drummer Paulinho Magalhães and bassist Sebastião Neto) when the first of these three shows was recorded at Charlie Puzzo's club on Pioneer Square. Playing a mix of popular hits (One Note Samba, The Girl From Ipanema), tunes by Brazilian composers (acknowledged in Sete's Peter Lorré-like tones) and his own compositions, it's instantly clear why the guitarist from Rio was so admired worldwide, even if almost completely unknown in Brazil – John Fahey noted that Sete could put on a lousy show if he didn't know the room, but at the Penthouse he sounds right at home. Sadly, after the final show, the guitarist would go silent for two years (and the club was demolished), so this may be as good as it ever got.

David Hutcheon

Elvis Presley

★★★★

Back In Nashville

RCA/LEGACY. CD/DL/LP

The King's final Nashville studio recordings, undubbed and cut loose.

SAM PHILLIPS, Elvis's first producer, once said, "Generally I didn't go for overdubbing. Still don't, even if they get 94 tracks. I understand all the techniques and all the bullshit but I just don't see the spontaneity." What you have here are the 82 prime recordings from Presley's March, May and June 1971 sessions at RCA Studio B in Nashville, stripped of the musical embellishments added prior to their '70s release, leaving just the man himself singing a mixture of a gospel, folk, pop and Christmas songs, live in the room with the band. In every instance, the unvarnished original beats the familiar overdubbed version hollow. Early Mornin' Rain loses the unnecessary cloying backing singers; I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen is a hushed solo *tour-de-force*; the unedited and impromptu Don't Think Twice, It's All Right an absolute joy.

Max Décharné

Stripped back Presley: Elvis, unedited and unvarnished.

Courtesy of JAT Publishing

Redskins

★★★★

Neither Washington Nor Moscow

LONDON. CD/DL/LP

The complete works of the firebrand SWP skinheads on 4-CDs, with many extras.

"The hardest-working Marxist-Leninist skinhead band in the country as we speak" – as frontman Chris Dean drolly describes his mercurial mid-'80s outfit on the intro to one live track– released only one album in their lifetime, but it was a historic one. Setting aside the extraordinary Socialist Workers Party intrigue behind their rise and fall, as detailed in Keith Cameron's remarkable feature in MOJO 332, the Redskins' precision blend of Motown, post-punk and rockabilly was justification enough for their cult hero status. Here, their tale is unfolded from pre-'Skins band No Swastikas' demos, through indie singles Lev Bronstein and Lean On Me, to 1986's slick and funky *Neither Washington Nor Moscow*, ending with bootleg live versions of unrecorded songs I Can't Stand The Boss and a Smiths-y Names Were Named that suggest they were increasingly impressive craftsmen at the point of their untimely, SWP-ordered split.

Pat Gilbert

Gregory Porter

★★★

Still Rising

BLUE NOTE/DECCA. CD/DL

The jazz cat in the hat's story so far. Plus five new songs.

Porter's ascent to fame has been meteoric. A decade ago, he had one album to his name and was largely unknown outside of the US jazz community. That quickly changed in 2013 when his major label debut, *Liquid Spirit*, catapulted him into the mainstream. Though Porter's branched out by hosting podcasts and TV cookery shows, this double-disc anthology reminds us that his true calling is music. In addition to being blessed with a richly expressive baritone voice, he's a skilled songwriter who makes perceptive observations about love and life. Whether he's delivering poetic ballads (Hey Laura) or incendiary protest songs (1960 What?), Porter always invests his performances with a soulful authenticity. While the excellent first disc is essential (it features five new songs including Dry Bones, an infectious dance anthem bristling with a sanctified fervour), the second, devoted to duets (some with dead pop stars, like Buddy Holly), is wholly surplus to requirements.

Charles Waring

Ryuichi Sakamoto

★★★

Esperanto

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

First worldwide release for Tokyo composer's little-known mid-'80s album.

After making his mark in the late '70s as a member of the influential synth-pop band Yellow Magic Orchestra, Sakamoto went solo and in 1983 earned global notoriety for his award-winning soundtrack to the acclaimed war movie Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence. *Esperanto*, a more experimental project written as ballet music for a Brooklyn dance troupe, followed in 1985 but until now, has never been available outside Japan. Mostly consisting of ambient sound collages created by computer-powered samplers and sequencers, it's a fascinating time capsule that reveals how advanced electronic technology (though very primitive by today's standards) was beginning to impact and shape pop. The best tracks are A Rain Song, defined by an iridescent shimmer, and A Carved Stone, where tuned wood-blocks mesh with tinkling bells and reverb-drenched piano notes.

Charles Waring

Frank Sinatra

★★★★

Reprise Rarities Volume 5

FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES/UME. DL

Sinatra's mostly-1960s duets with fellow pop giants.

When Frank Sinatra founded the Reprise label in 1960, it provided freedom for him and pals to have a party in the studio – albeit one with rigorous musical standards. This final volume in a digital-only series collects The Chairman Of The Board performing with a who's-who of pre-rock vocal stars. Naturally the Rat Pack – Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr, Dean Martin – are here. The lyrics are sometimes feather-fluff, but the guys are all in top form and having a blast. We Open In Venice is a showcase for these three kings of popular music to clown around as a "strolling troupe" traversing Italy. Other tracks feature Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Keely Smith. The set ends as Dad coos two sunshine pop songs with daughter Nancy and duets with future funkster Nikka Costa, who's just nine.

Michael Simmons

The Hesitations/ Freddy Butler

★★★

Soul Superman/With A Dab Of Soul

KENT. CD/DL

Twofer of Detroit soul rarities from Jack Ashford's Pied Piper label.

The Hesitations and Freddy Butler's respective 1967 debut long-players were masterminded by Pied Piper Productions AKA Motown Funk Brothers stalwart Jack Ashford and originally issued on Kapp. Butler was known for his big soul voice and a smooth sophisticated style, and *With A Dab Of Soul* plays to his strengths with a ballad-heavy set including the sublime They Say I'm Afraid (Of Losing You) and Just Because You've Been Hurt, while on '70s Northern soul dancer That's When I Need You he really whips up a storm. The Hesitations, meanwhile, were rougher round the edges and, influenced by their pal Edwin Starr, hit with Soul Superman, their debut single, pretty much a rewrite of Starr's Agent Double O Soul. They then made an album featuring a bunch of Starr-like tracks that had they been issued on Motown might very well have made it.

Lois Wilson

Popol Vuh, with Florian Fricke (right): somewhere between celestial and sinister.

Songs of devotion

Four discs bring together over-looked works by Florian Fricke's kosmischers. By **Andrew Male**.

Popol Vuh

★★★★

Vol. 2 – Acoustic & Ambient Spheres

BMG. DL/LP

RELEASED IN 2019, the first volume of BMG's ongoing Popol Vuh reissue programme featured five albums by the devotional German cosmonauts, from the primitive alien Moog-trips of 1970 debut *Affenstunde* to a double-disc version of their dark mantric 1978 score for Werner Herzog's Nosferatu, via the gnostic electric mass of 1972's *Hosianna Mantra*, the soaring oceanic hymnals of 1974's *Einsjäger & Siebenjäger* and the majestic, mysterious *Aguirre* from 1976. It was titled *The Essential Album Collection*, implying that any subsequent anthology would be something lesser.

Not so. If *Vol. 2* brings together four of the Vuh's less familiar works it does so in the knowledge that they are worthy of reappraisal. The first, 1973's *Seligpreisung*, the follow-up to *Hosianna Mantra*, finds Florian Fricke reworking the Gospel of Matthew, and marks the arrival of Amon Düül II's Daniel Fichelscher on guitars and drums. Along with the second guitarist, Gila's Conny Veit, Fichelscher lends Florian Fricke and Robert Eliscu's pastoral oboe and piano duets a Floydian grandeur, with Fricke's singing (regular vocalist Djong Yun was absent) investing the album's acclamations with a restless unearthly uncertainty.

The second LP here, *Coeur De Verre*, marks another significant stylistic shift. After the surging psych guitar waves and dark Krishna heaviosity of 1976's *Letzte Tage-Letzte Nächte*, Fricke composed the all-instrumental score to Werner Herzog's dreamlike, eerie 1976 film Heart Of Glass, a tale of an 18th century Bavarian town descending into madness in which the director hypnotised the entire cast to elicit the correct trance-like performances. Fittingly, the score might be the group's most mesmerising, Fichelscher's euphoric high altitude guitar dancing patterns around Fricke's hypnotic piano, Alois Gromer's meditative ceremonial sitar and the uncanny trance-like flute of Mathias Tippelskirch.

In the wake of this recognised career high, 1983's *Agape-Agape Love-Love* comes as a complete surprise. Fricke regarded it as one of Popol Vuh's finest works but its reputation is mixed and released versions have suffered from poor sound quality. Admittedly, the version here (reviewed on mp3) still sounds muddy in places but the album itself has aged exceptionally well, Renate Knaup's layered vocals meshing with Fichelscher and Veit's ascending guitars, and Fricke's eerily thrummed piano create a weird, unfolding soundtrack to ritualistic worship somewhere between celestial and sinister.

The last work here, *Cobra Verde*, marked both Herzog's final collaboration with Popol Vuh and the group's last grand work. Made in collaboration with the Bavarian State Opera, it's a curiously professional and stately affair, undeniably beautiful but lacking the other-worldly mystery of his greatest work. There are certainly other Popol Vuh albums that could have been included in its place, but doubtless they are being made ready for *Volume Three*.

©Editions Popol Vuh

Various

★★★★

Cuba: Music And Revolution Vol 2

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

More experiments in Latin music 1975-82, compiled by Gilles Peterson.

Cuban musicians had always borrowed inspiration from abroad, merging French, Spanish, Catholic and African to produce, first, Caribbean classical music, then the rumba and mambo they exported. As salsa thrived in North America, however, the significance of the socialist sunshine state waned. This didn't mean innovation stalled: Cold War rhetoric couldn't stop jazz and funk seeping across borders, and from Havana to Santiago, Cubans leapt on the latest sounds, instruments and innovations. The revolutionaries were Los Van Van, formed at the end of the 1960s as a distinctively Cuban rock band, but the following decade saw Grupo Sintesis pioneering progressive jazz, Grupo De Experimentacíon Sonora Del ICAIC dropping acid-tinged tropicalia, and Farah Maria recording disco that owed a lot to the Middle East. Boycotts dulled their impact abroad, however, making this a valuable time capsule, full of previously unknown delights.

David Hutcheon

Faust

★★★★

1971-1974

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

"Virtually complete" collection of first wave recordings from the German music revolutionaries.

The last Faust box set, The 5-CD *Wümme Years*, came out 20 years ago, spanning 1971 to 1973 when Uwe Nettelbeck's kosmische avant-garde spent Polydor's money on recording two studio LPs and a wealth of anti-rock, psych-folk experiments in a village school in lower Saxony. This new set, which includes all four studio LPs, does not have the heavy motorik jam of that collection's *71 Minutes* (AKA '*The Last LP*') or the distorto-jazz grooves of their *BBC Sessions*. Instead, there are two LPs of previously unreleased Wümme material and 1974's *Punkt*, recorded in Munich at Giorgio Moroder's Musicland Studios. Cut at night time, after Donna Summer and entourage had gone home, while their Virgin contract lay in tatters, it's an album of exorcism and invocation, moving between gabbling electronic spirituals and epic mantric space jams. A standalone release is to be wished for and subsequently treasured.

Andrew Male

Rick Olivier

Jethro Tull

★★★

Benefit: The 50th Anniversary Enhanced Edition

PARLOPHONE. CD

Ian Anderson & co in a still innovative, albeit transitional phase.

Jethro Tull had initially been hyped as a blues-jazz-rock hybrid, and their debut album, *This Was*, validated that description. By album number two, *Stand Up*, they'd begun veering in a more prog and hard-rock direction, which they fine-tuned here, on 1970's *Benefit*, quite possibly their most impressive creation overall. Singer/flautist/acoustic guitarist Ian Anderson's songs – among them With You There To Help Me, To Cry You A Song and the folky Sossity; You're A Woman – were more complex, somewhat edgier and heavier on the guitar riffs, courtesy of new addition Martin Barre. This 4-CD/2-DVD/hardcover book upgrade doubles up on the 2013 Collector's Edition, presenting original mono and stereo mixes, various remixes, a smattering of unreleased tracks and, most significantly, two period live performances (one duplicated on DVD) that indicate the band had already moved into a new realm, where most of the subtlety and nuance had given way to showmanship.

Jeff Tamarkin

Joe Henderson

★★★★

The Complete Joe Henderson Blue Note Sessions

MOSAIC. CD

Influential jazz sax player's '60s output for Alfred Lion's legendary label.

Many casual jazz fans will be familiar with Joe Henderson from his big, blustery solos on two of Blue Note's most iconic tracks: Lee Morgan's The Sidewinder and Horace Silver's Song For My Father, both recorded near the midpoint of the 1960s when the Ohio-born hornblower was one of the label's exciting new discoveries. This 5-CD box set (only available from www.mosaicrecords.com) contains all five albums he recorded for Blue Note between 1963 and 1966 and also features collaborations with trumpeter Kenny Dorham. Across the set's 47 tunes (three previously unissued), you can hear how Henderson's forceful playing was unique, incorporating jazz and blues with piquant Latin and avant-garde inflections. The set's defining moment is Mode For Joe, as Henderson's horn, howling like a wounded animal, exudes a spine-tingling brilliance.

Charles Waring

Stereo Total

★★★★

Chanson Hystérique 1995-2005

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

116-song testament to the late Françoise Cactus' peculiar genius.

Cactus, who died from breast cancer in February aged just 57, was a cult heroine nonpareil. As singing drummer in the late-'80s Franco-German garage-rock band Lolitas, her deviant raunch wowed producer Alex Chilton, and after starting up lo-fi synth duo Stereo Total with life partner Brezel Göring, her kinky, uniquely infectious songcraft about threesomes and Holiday Inn trysts won high-profile fans like Beastie Boys and The Strokes, and TV ads for Dior, if never the outright crossover it deserved. Before her passing, Cactus was readying this box set of Stereo Total's first six albums, which reveal the pair's maverick range – like a saucy, trilingual Saint Etienne, with governing predilections for both '60s French pop and trashy '50s ramalama, plus a propensity for ace covers (Bowie, Hot Chocolate). Almost all the previously released material is terrifically entertaining, while a bonus disc packs 19 way-up-to-snuff offcuts, including hilarious Gallic reworkings of California Sun and Drive My Car.

Andrew Perry

Matt Berry

★★★★

Gather Up

ACID JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

5-LP or 4-CD, 55-track retrospective.

As red flags go, actors trying their hand at music could hardly be more scarlet, but Matt Berry has been crafting startling albums for most of this century. *Gather Up* is testament to his extraordinary breadth of vision, ranging from bucolic folk to unashamed rock, via '70s whimsy, lavishly layered production and, for all his penchant for an anthem, fearless exploration. The first 21 tracks are a separately-available standard compilation, but the infinitely more rewarding long haul adds outtakes (Geno Washington, of all people, pops up on the brassy Catch Me In Time, a retitled version of Berry's Snuff Box Theme), surprisingly-accomplished demos and a fearsome live set culled from assorted festivals. In thrall to The Amazing Blondel as much as The Teardrop Explodes, Berry is almost impossible to pin down, but he's created a joy-laden, unique, always accessible world.

John Aizlewood

Leo Nocentelli

★★★★

Another Side

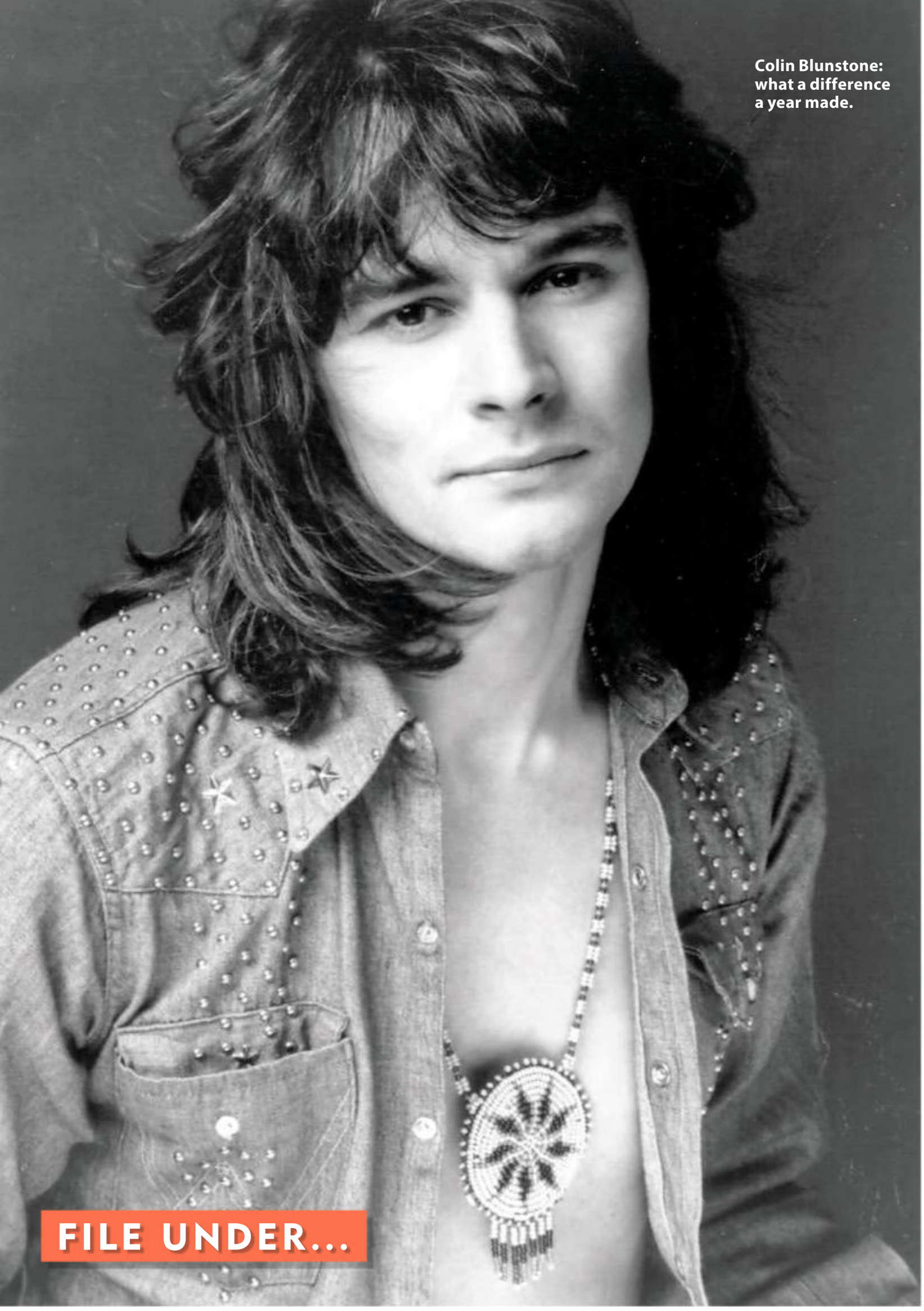
LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

Long-lost '70s 'folk' album by legendary funk/R&B guitarist.

REISSUES label Light In The Attic excels at digging up really fine obscurities, and this album is both. Not that Leo Nocentelli's particularly obscure – he has a Lifetime Achievement Grammy, but for playing guitar with artists like The Meters, Otis Redding and The Temptations and writing songs sung by Bootsy Collins, The Neville Brothers and Etta James. Still, as the title says, there was once another side. He recorded these 10 songs more than 50 years ago between gigs and sessions at a time when mellow singer-songwriters ruled, opening with an acoustic Thinking Of The Day and closing with a very cool cover of Elton John's then-new hit Your Song. There's electric as well as acoustic guitar; blues (Riverfront) as much as folk rock (Tell Me Why, a touch CSN-y); and a soulful, mellow band that includes Allen Toussaint, James Black and The Meters' rhythm. Thorough linernotes tell the whole story.

Sylvie Simmons

Leo Nocentelli: Meters man takes solo shot.



Colin Blunstone: what a difference a year made.

FILE UNDER...

String driven thing

How an exhausted insurance clerk made a baroque'n'roll classic. By **Jim Irvin.**

THE ZOMBIES formed in St. Albans as schoolboys, had their first worldwide hit with She's Not There in 1964 and then, after three years' solid touring, problems with management and nobody wanting to issue their brilliant *Odessey & Oracle* album, fell apart in 1968. At that point, singer Colin Blunstone was, he once told me, "An exhausted 22-year-old, drained mentally, emotionally and physically." And given that it was still a relatively new form, it's no wonder he thought, 'That's it then, I've done pop music,' and signed up to become a clerk in a company selling insurance.

The following year, producer Mike Hurst started calling Blunstone at work and persuaded him to sign a new deal with Deram under the name Neil MacArthur, a project beginning, rather bizarrely, with a cover of She's Not There (a minor hit). "I don't know why we did that," Blunstone said.

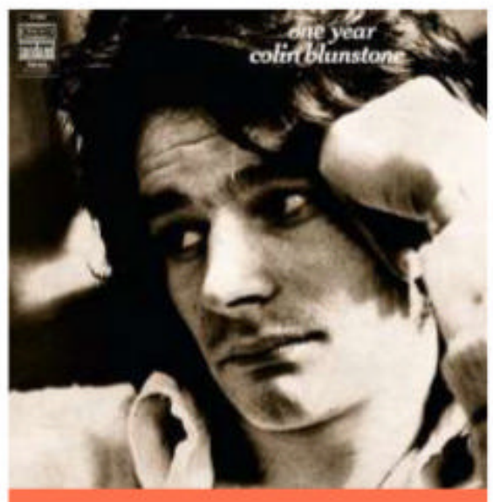
But it spurred him to start writing material for himself again, influenced and assisted by his flatmate at the time, the superb acoustic guitar player, Duncan Browne. Aware of developments like Crosby, Stills & Nash, Blunstone saw a way his sweet, melodic style could fit into the current climate and began to gather contemporary songs that would suit it, like Tim Hardin's Misty Roses and Denny Laine's Say You Don't Mind, a song The Zombies had covered live.

Ex-bandmates Rod Argent and Chris White were starting new band, Argent. They invited Blunstone to watch them rehearse, He was blown away and inspired. Out of the blue, White and Argent suggested they produce a solo album for him and arranged a deal with their label, Epic. One of them had the idea of setting Say You Don't Mind for a string quartet, which led to arranger Chris Gunning, whose sound turned the record into a baroque gem, a natural extension of George Martin's arrangements for The Beatles, and nudging what Jeff Lynne was trying with ELO. In fact, Blunstone toured supporting ELO, taking along a string quartet and a four-piece band who'd alternate songs and then all play together for the finale.

That's roughly what you're hearing on that gorgeous 1971 solo album, *One Year* ★★★★ (Sundazed), now celebrating its 50th year on earth with a new expanded 2-LP edition that adds an extra disc of demos and outtakes long buried in the archive of Chris White, where they were recently unearthed by his sons. Most of these feature just Blunstone and acoustic guitar accompaniment (four of them with Browne) and illustrate how he could also have made an intimate, *Pink Moon*-style record, stripped to the bare essentials, his lovely breathy voice curling around the songs like smoke, as it does at the start of Misty Roses. Instead, *One Year* opts for drama and grandeur. Misty Roses develops into a full-on chamber quartet piece. The following Smokey Day opens with sinister cellos and the singer doubletracked over further strings and harp. First single, Mike D'Abo's Mary Won't You Warm My Bed has an expansive, almost Northern soul feel, combining both rhythm section (featuring the whole of Argent) and strings by Tony Visconti.

Gunning's bold quartet arrangement for Say You Don't Mind gave Blunstone his first solo hit in 1972 when it was the third single drawn from the album. Years later, the distinctive use of strings on this record inspired Jeff Buckley's A&R man Steve Berkowitz to suggest they add some to *Grace*, helping create another album that swerves between heavy rock and chamber hush in support of an extraordinary voice.

One Year is an idiosyncratic classic that deserves to be more widely loved. This is a reissue to treasure.



"His breathy voice curling around songs like smoke."

Getty

St. Vincent

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The O'Jays: princes of Philly soul.

Philly flyers

In 1973, Gamble & Huff moved up a gear. By **Geoff Brown**.

Various

★★★★

Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Sound Of Philadelphia International Records Vol. 2

UNITED SOULS. CD/DL

THIS SECOND box of eight PIR albums on CD revisits one five-star classic, two solid four-star works, a couple of repromotions of earlier productions by Kenneth Gamble & Leon Huff, a superstar emerging from a cabaret act, and two ambitious projects, both concepts of varying success.

First, the essentials. Many discerning MOJO readers will own The O'Jays' *Ship Ahoy*, the trio's best album. Encompassing the US Top 10 pop hits Put Your Hands Together and For The Love Of Money alongside the title track's grim voyage on a slave ship, the exuberant ecology commentary of This Air I Breathe and more standard love songs such as Now That We Found Love, this landmark record still sounds fresh.

It's closely followed by the easy style and classy Gamble & Huff writing found on The Intruders' *Super Hits* (from US Number 1 R&B hit Cowboys To Girls and Northern soul favourite Check Yourself to We'll Be United).

The Intruders had been one of the producers' first acts and this set collected their earlier pop-soul delights. The Three Degrees' self-named PIR debut was a second solid release full of classy dance music delivered by the exceptional Sigma Sound house band – When Will I See You Again, Year Of Decision and Dirty Ol' Man.

A second O'Jays CD, *In Philadelphia*, had been released in 1970 on Neptune, but the Gamble & Huff label stalled, though not before One Night Affair and Deeper (In Love With You) had been US R&B hits. It was reissued in '73, as was Billy Paul's jazzy *Feelin' Good At The Cadillac Club* five years after its first release on Gamble in 1968. Paul's other LP here, the weighty concept *War Of The Gods*, 'has its fans', as they say, but the venture's ambition outstripped the end product. Elsewhere, with Teddy Pendergrass emerging from their ranks as a lead singer of power and physicality, Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes' *Black And Blue* opened with Cabaret, a tame reminder of their supper club days, improved through Satisfaction Guaranteed and The Love I Lost, but it's not their greatest.

Finally, the rarity. Spiritual Concept were a quartet formed around studio musicians/songwriters Theodore Life (AKA T Life) and TG Conway, and their *Spiritual Concept* promised much. However, like Motown's many attempts to diversify in the '60s, it's a misconceived concept. Spiritual Sky had an echo of Spirit In The Sky, a full arrangement with strings, psych guitar and a bolero section towards its fade. A similar kitchen-sink strategy stuffed Let's Take It All full of styles. The rest – Remedy; Get It On; the awful California Women – is clunky uptempo rock.

Completing this strong package: a bonus single pairing the Blue Notes' The Love I Lost and The O'Jays' It's Too Strong and a 48-page booklet by Philly authority Tony Cummings.

Barry Brown

★★★

Praises

PRESSURE SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Self-styled 'Jamaican Bob Dylan' meets the Italian dub remixer.

This isn't a lost album from the singer who hit big with 1979's Step It Up Youthman, the roots reggae classic produced by Bunny 'Striker' Lee and featuring The Aggrovators. Instead, it's a cherry pick of Brown's catalogue from his late '70s/early '80s golden years with Striker given a Tubby-like dub treatment by Italian producer Paolo Baldini Dubfiles. Baldini utilises what he calls "a heavy analog approach to sounds and effects", borne out here by tracks such as Step It Up, Natty Rootsman and Give Thanks And Praise drenched in shuddering echo and reverb with found sounds (an audio of Baldini's son crying, a door bell ringing, cut ups from an old nature programme) added for ghostly atmospherics. At the core, though, Brown's rough and boisterous signature style remains intact.

Lois Wilson

Brix Smith & Marty Willson-Piper

★★★★

Lost Angeles

GRIT OVER GLAMOUR/CADIZ MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Shelved project from The Fall's renaissance woman blinks into life.

Written in California between 1992 and 1994 when Brix Smith was between stints in The Fall and recorded in Penzance with The Church's Marty Willson-Piper in 1997, *Lost Angeles* has been kept out of view until now. Smith cites her vulnerable state of mind around the time of recording as the reason she held it back, but there's something about this beautifully fluent collection of songs that suits the shadows. While Willson-Piper's guitar underscores the idea this is all-grown-up college rock, Backwards and Little Wounds lying in the sweetest spot between R.E.M., Pixies and Belly, Smith's granulated voice dissolves into lyrics about head injuries, cannibalism and, on whimsical anthem for the awkward, Hooves For Hands, social anxiety. On Top Of You is revenge-fantasy Bangles; Soup's odd recipe bubbles with horror-film keyboards. Darker than it seems, *Lost Angeles* deserves a moment in the spotlight.

Victoria Segal

Bush Tetras

★★★★

Rhythm And Paranoia: The Best Of Bush Tetras

WHARF CAT. CD/LP

Era-spanning box set of 29 songs from the New York no wave revolutionaries.

The sudden tragic death of Bush Tetras' drummer Dee Pop last month gives this release a painful poignancy. Since 1980's spare, sparse feminist manifesto Too Many Creeps, Bush Tetras have created an eclectic fusion of post-punk and discordant downtown disco, inspiring other musicians but rarely getting their due. This compilation – including '80s tracks produced for Stiff by Topper Headon, heavy '90s alt-rock with Nona Hendryx, and more recent work with Don Fleming (Sonic Youth, Hole) – does them justice, showing the evolution of the band from the scratchy, erratic noise funk of early days to the more assured rolling riffs of the 2010s. One of the most compelling tracks is included as a digital bonus – the Henry Rollins-produced Cutting Floor. Previously unreleased, it captures the band in 1996, at their most defiant and defined.

Lucy O'Brien

Fionn Regan

★★★★

100 Acres Of Sycamore

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

Tenth-anniversary heavy-vinyl edition for Bray troubadour's landmark LP.

The Eurovision Song Contest transformed 18-year-old future Irish MEP Dana, who won in 1970 with All Kinds Of Everything. In 2006, County Wicklow offered its contribution to the history of homespun Irish folk'n'roll in Fionn Regan from Bray. Nominated for Mercury, Choice and Shortlist equivalents, Regan was enshrined by Lucinda Williams as "his generation's Bob Dylan". Pivotal third LP *100 Acres Of Sycamore* – recorded at Anna Friel's Mallorcan villa – marks a pastoral pivot. A punchy title track ("knuckle to knuckle") squeaks mordant violin, Sow Mare Bitch Vixen finds life in spit and "the caves of your fingers", rhyming "foster" with Paul Auster ("I've always had a thing for dangerous women"). All kinds of everything are covered by animal hide, sleeping horses, dogwood blossom, spit, estuaries, cemeteries, and nightfall; Regan's delicate lisp bringing further intimacy, as if perhaps sung in a cave.

Andrew Collins

Sandy Speiser

Can

★★★★

Live In Brighton 1975

SPOON/MUTE. CD/DL/LP

Archival live series hits East Sussex!

With keyboardist Irmin Schmidt wearing a far-out chainmail waistcoat, Can were filmed for BBC2's Old Grey Whistle Test on November 18, 1975. The next night they played Sussex University. This restored, complete recording of that gig is a markedly different beast to the TV appearance and the same year's polished studio set *Landed*. Improvising in the moment, drummer Jaki Liebezeit sets the groove in perpetual, thundering motion on Eins, with Michael Karoli's Happy Mondays/Chic guitars and Schmidt's church organ finding the spot where JS Bach and fatback funk meet (bassist Holger Czukay, meanwhile, appears to play The Stone Roses' Fools Gold at one juncture). Can's high-wire spontaneous creation sustains over 90 mind-bending minutes at the highest pitch, with 'Godzilla' sonic meltdowns, mesmerising back-and-forth and Sieben's climactic revisiting of *Ege Bamyasi*'s breakdancer's choice Vitamin C. Pure dynamite – keep them coming, Spoon Records.

Ian Harrison

Nirvana

★★★★★

Nevermind (30th Anniversary Deluxe Edition)

UMC. CD+BR/LP

Multi-disc box set, with four unbeatable live albums!

The last big-anniversary *Nevermind* box set in 2011 dutifully trawled through early mixes – a forensic study in how this era-defining album was honed, but not something you'd play more than once. A Seattle live DVD showed only a band caged by intrusive camerawork. Ten years on, a tastier proposition: four FM-quality full-show recordings from November 1991 through to February '92, when Nirvana clinched global crossover simply by being the world's most exciting live band at every stop. A handful of tracks each from Amsterdam (which was filmed by VPRO-TV) and Del Mar, California (actually promo'd on cassette in '92) appeared on 1996's *From The Muddy Banks Of The Wishkah*; otherwise, it's all officially unreleased, particularly Melbourne and Tokyo, and all absolutely killer. The takeaway: Cobain was so focused in his fury; apart from Amsterdam's frighteningly 'off' Come As You Are and some peripheral goofing, here was a deeply troubled artist hitting the bullseye again and again.

Andrew Perry

Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band

★★★★

The Legendary 1979 No Nukes Concerts

COLUMBIA. CD+DVD/DL/LP

Madison Square Garden gigs' soundtrack and film.

Both Bruce Springsteen sets from the 1979 New York MUSE Concerts For A Non-Nuclear Future were made available via the Springsteen Live Archive in December 2018. So even the devoted may wonder why, aside from spiffy artwork and a Bob Clearmountain remix, should they shell out again for a 13-track compilation from the same shows? The obvious answer lies amid the folds of Clarence Clemons' crimson suit: the CD package offers a high-quality 90-minute concert film, 10 of its 13 songs never previously seen. With his band ablaze, Springsteen carries the wired look of a man who's spent the previous six months making what would be his first Number 1 record, and the live debut of The River is one of many highlights, though some occasional surly stage chat also betrays unease with his situation. It's a vivid glimpse of a phenomenon on the cusp of mega-fame.

Keith Cameron

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Elvis Costello, Yard Act (pictured), Urge Overkill, Gorillaz, Hiss Golden Messenger, Arthur Russell, The Dream Syndicate, The Band, Let's Eat Grandma, Green Day, Christy Moore, Eels, Cat Power and more.

REISSUES EXTRA

Cluster

★★★★

Cluster 71

BUREAU B. LP

After Kluster, Roedelius and Moebius's 1971 debut as Cluster brings radiophonic howls from the bowels of an alien space craft, with interstellar/psychedelic electronics and urgent rhythmic figures coming over the listener in huge and terrifying waves. Still sounds new. *IH*

Matt Deighton

★★★★

Villager

ACID JAZZ. LP

A former MOJO Buried Treasure, the 1995 solo debut from the Mother Earth singer and Paul Weller guitarist took a similar path to that trod by PW in the early '90s: into woody, folk hymnals dealing in soulful introspection, with a John Martyn-ish vibe. Remastered on clear vinyl. *CP*

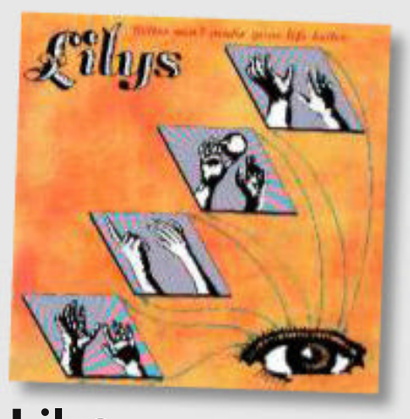
Keith Hudson

★★★★★

Flesh Of My Skin, Blood Of My Blood

VP. CD/DL/LP

The Kingston producer and sometime dentist's 1974 heavy roots reggae landmark, remastered with bonus cuts and diligent linernotes. A mystic brew: Hudson's unearthly voice; ace players (Count Ossie); black liberation song cycle (even Bob Dylan's I Shall Be Released). *KC*



Lilys

★★★★

Better Can't Make Your Life Better

SUNDAZED. LP

Now back on vinyl, the Lilys' fourth album, a detail-perfect 1996 pastiche of that mid-'60s moment when garage rock morphed into psychedelia. Levi's ad soundtrack Nanny In Manhattan proved an unlikely hit; the brutish Kinks-y power chords and acid-dipped chamber-pop of mini-epic Shovel Into Spade Kit is the standout. *SC*

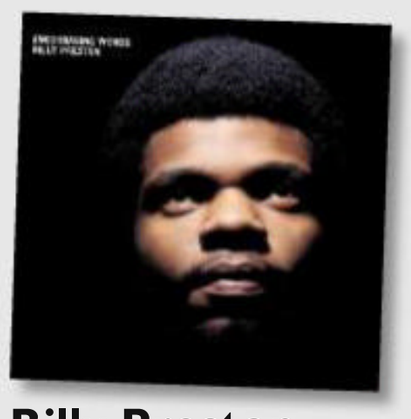
Atakora Manu

★★★★

Afro Highlife/ Omintiminim

BBE. DL/LP

Double set of '80s curios from the late Ghanaian guitarist and studio whiz. The juddering pace set on opener Asante Kotoko – a 10-minute tribute to Kumasi's local football legends – and the enigmatic mix of electronics with highlife guitar, brass and woodwind will appeal to Congotronics fans. *JB*



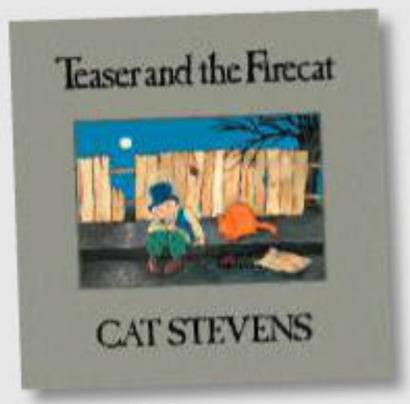
Billy Preston

★★★★

Encouraging Words

APPLE. LP

He'd worked on The Beatles' *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road* albums so it was only fair that the piano/organ man's second LP for the Fabs' label included Lennon & McCartney and George Harrison songs to go with Preston's own material. Harrison co-produced, the 1970 album is an impressively assured marriage of soul, funk and gospel. A top Apple release. *GB*



Yusuf/Cat Stevens

★★★★

Teaser And The Firecat

UMC. CD/DL/LP

50th anniversary box set of 1971's sensitive-singer-songwriter-with-mainstream-instincts apogee. Opener The Wind sets the tone of seeking, self-examination with spiritual undertones. Oodles of extras include a raw, folky 1970 demo of Moonshadow. *CP*

Various

★★★★

Ritmo Fantasía

SOUNDWAY. CD/DL/LP

Subtitled *Balearic Spanish Synth-Pop, Boogie and House (1982-1992)*, 21 "one-off grooves" illuminate the Spanish underground scene at the dawn of dance music. Much of it is blissful, cocktail hour stuff (Marengo's gorgeous Puente De Esperanza), gently ravey (Madrid Groove's Suave), occasionally silly (I Love My Body by Zas). *JB*

Mary Wilson

★★★★

The Motown Anthology

REAL GONE MUSIC. CD/DL

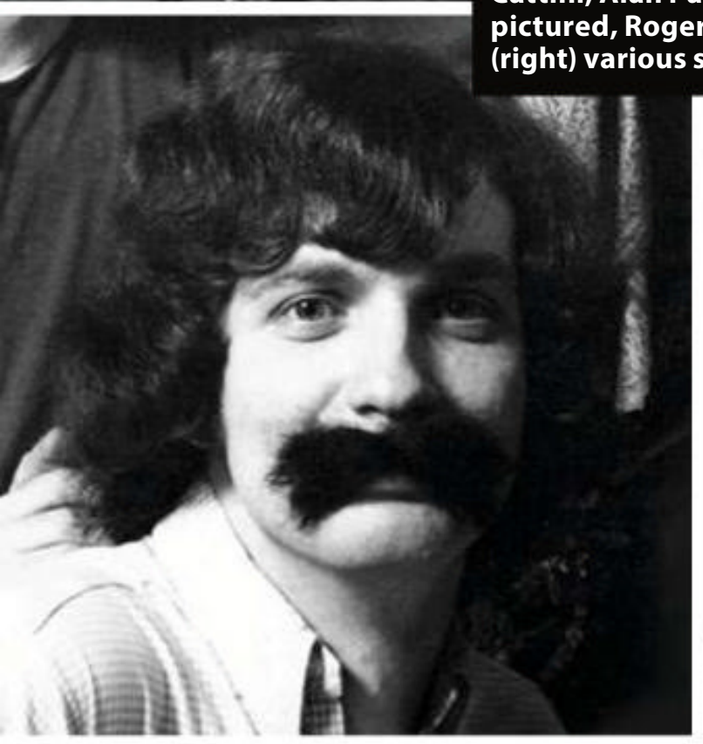
Tribute to the late Supreme spans her first known recording (The Primettes' Pretty Baby), Supremes classics, expanded '79 self-titled LP, and unreleased Supremes tracks including Witchi Tai To. The booklet includes tributes from colleagues and fans including Hillary Rodham Clinton. *JB*

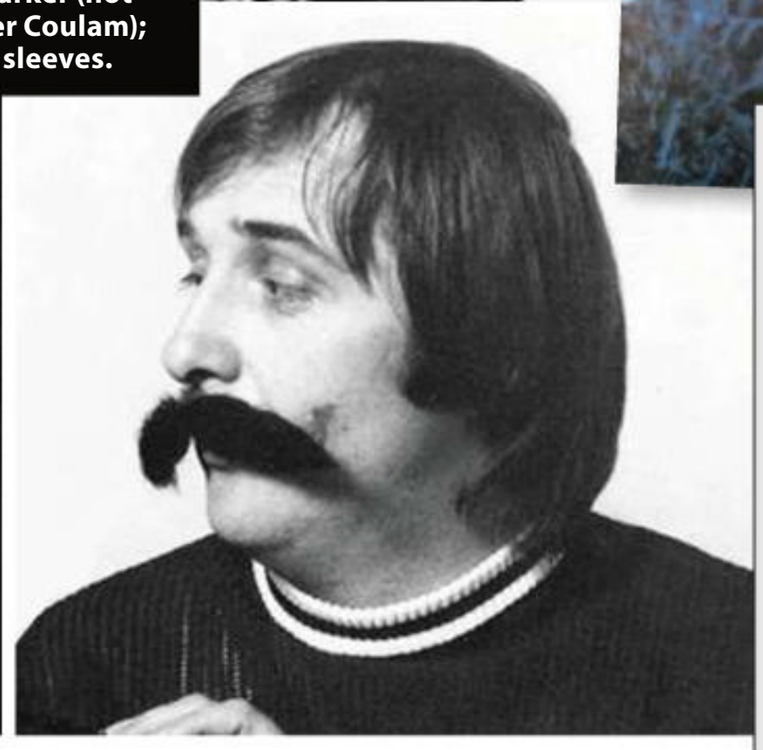
RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VERSATILE DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★ MOJO CLASSIC ★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ BEST AVOIDED ☆ DEPLORABLE





Pour boys: (clockwise from top left) Herbie Flowers, Alan Hawkshaw, Clem Cattini, Alan Parker (not pictured, Roger Coulam); (right) various sleeves.

Soul dessert

Rediscovered under obscuria's floorboards: session aces play hot instrumental rock, funk and prog.

Ugly Custard
Ugly Custard

KALEIDOSCOPE, 1970

AS SUCH way-out Library Music catalogues as Jonny Trunk's The Music Library and David Hollander's Unusual Sounds have shown, background sounds-to-order frequently came wrapped in deranged cover art that would never have survived in the civilian pop world. Yet, when the sessioneers who played it defected to above-ground rock bands, they sometimes took the design aesthetic with them. Try the oddly taxidermised dog with boggly eyes on Hungry Wolf's self-titled 1970 debut of brassy grooves (later recycled as *Music For A Young Generation* on the KPM label), or the loopy comic strip livery of Shel Talmy-produced soul rockers Rumpelstiltskin the same year.

With vocalist Peter Lee Stirling, those bands also featured drummer Clem Cattini, guitarist Alan Parker and bassist Herbie Flowers. All seasoned session players with lengthy pedigrees, in 1970 they joined forces with organist Roger Coulam and recorded their one album as Ugly Custard. Its waterside detritus sleeve art spoke of its future status as the preserve of the beachcombers and metal detectorists of music (an alternative sleeve featured a scarred, naked homunculus with a spilled jug of custard).

Drummer Cattini had huge success in the early '60s with The Tornados and went on to play on big sellers for Tom Jones, The Walker Brothers, Thunderclap Newman and more, while his 1970 credits included Edison Lighthouse's Love Grows, Bob Downes Open Music's *Electric City* and Sounds Nice's Love At First Sight – a de-smutted cover of Je T'Aime… Moi Non Plus. Parker, Flowers and Coulam all had day jobs in hitmakers Blue Mink. Yet with a new name picked as "a bit of banter", the pull of the session was strong.

"At that time, people liked instrumental records," says Cattini. "People kept asking us to make albums, and I think Alan Parker instigated that one. It ended up being that little team of us, and then also Alan Hawkshaw [the late keyboardist, writer and arranger, remembered on page115]. I think we produced it ourselves, at Pye Studios right round the back of Marble Arch, probably in about three three-hour sessions. Studio time was so expensive and hard to get, you see."

Mixing Parker originals with purloined covers including Scarboro' Fair and Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You, there was no time for messing around. "We just went in and did it," says Cattini. "You didn't even rehearse, they'd throw the music at you and you had to play it. Some of the Ugly Custard stuff, Alan Hawkshaw would write the basic parts, not note for note, but just a roadmap of where we start, the middle and where we finish, but we played what we felt the track needed, you know, off the cuff. Christ, they were so efficient. I mean, Alan Parker was one of the best guitar players I ever worked with. For want of a better word, he could read fly shit. Put a piece of music in front of him and that's it, straight away."

Straddling instrumental rock, folk, funk, psych and prog, the sure steps of confident players in tune with one another are everywhere in evidence on Ugly Custard. With hints of woodsmoke and peat, Scarboro' Fair's rustic mood changes gear into a rocking chase for organ and electric guitar before arpeggiated meditations kick in: a sombre and majestic Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You teases out the anguish (Cattini was in the running to join his fellow session aces Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones in Led Zeppelin, but is sanguine about the coincidence today). There are masterful Swinging London organ freakouts like the zigzagging Custard's Last Stand, a Parker/Hawkshaw co-write repurposed from the Hungry Wolf LP, and workouts in blues, Southern soul and, via a version of Buffalo Springfield's Hung Upside Down, mellow West Coast rock. The tracks are linked by short, florid guitar motifs by Parker.

"I don't think we actually deliberately did it that way," says Cattini of the album's complimentary flavours. "It's just what came out. I think we were trying to go in the direction that would make a bit of money, basically!"

Such was Cattini's busy schedule he can't remember the album's release, and Ugly Custard's hoped-for impact would go unrealised. It would, however, be released abroad in various alarming covers, such as the Spanish release retitled *Psicosis* and a West German edition superimposing Christopher Lee's Frankenstein over a Victorian doll.

"It could have taken off like Zeppelin did," muses the drummer today, "but they had good management and there was nobody managing us. We never did any live work at all with Ugly Custard, with Hungry Wolf or even Rumpelstiltskin. And the BBC didn't like the fact that there were session men making records. You know, they should have told Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones and people like that then."

Like his bandmates, Cattini returned to the session fray, and in short order played on hit songs including Clive Dunn's Grandad (co-written by Flowers) and Middle Of The Road's Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep, as well as sessions for Slapp Happy, Lou Reed and, for Peter Noone's Oh You Pretty Thing, David Bowie. He thinks he last worked with the other members of Ugly Custard in the early '90s, before technology filled the space once occupied by sessioners, and is still in touch with Parker.

"We were all mates," he says. "It wasn't like The Kinks or whatever, there were no fights going on. It was mutual respect and a good camaraderie, and that's what I miss now. Music is people playing together and feeding off each other. I'm not being blasé about it, but we did do that."

Ian Harrison

CREDITS

Tracks: Scarboro' Fair / My Babe / Hung Upside Down / Custard's Last Stand / Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You / Cry From The Heart / Never In A Blues Day / Feel This

Personnel: Alan Parker (guitar), Herbie Flowers (bass), Roger Coulam (organ), Clem Cattini (drums), Alan Hawkshaw (keyboards)

Producer: Ugly Custard

Recorded: Pye Studios, London

Released: 1971

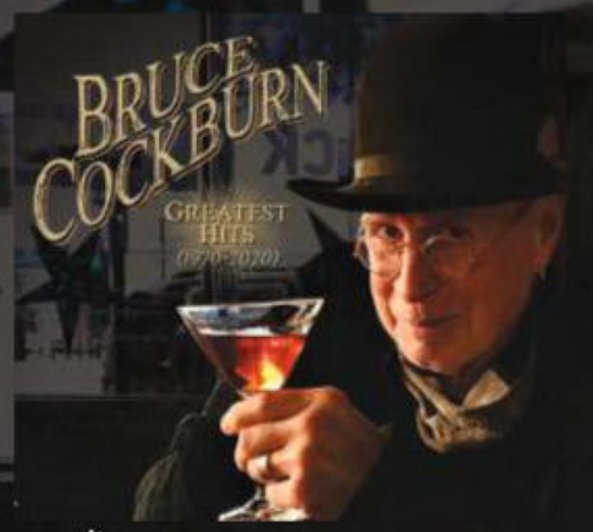
Chart peak: n/a

Available: Strut reissue, 2012

"You didn't rehearse, they'd throw the music at you and you had to play it."
CLEM CATTINI

BRUCE COCKBURN

GREATEST HITS (1970-2020)



The consummate collection curated by Bruce Cockburn himself, presents 30 songs over a double album that defines his 50-year career.

TRUE NORTH RECORDS

FACTOR ONTARIO CREATES

Available Dec 3

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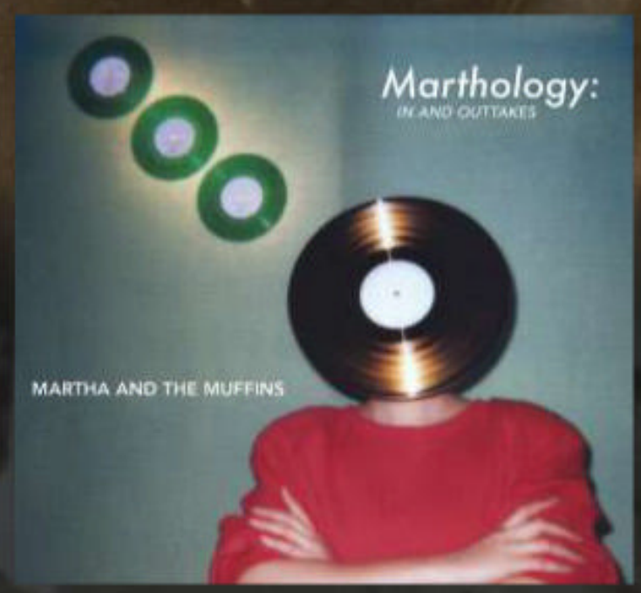
Martha and the Muffins



Spanning 35 years of recordings, the compilation sees founding members Martha Johnson and Mark Gane revisit their extensive archives to select 12 rare singles, B-sides and unreleased songs.

Out Nov 5

popguru

Marthaandthemuffins.com / Popguru.ca

MUFFIN MUSIC

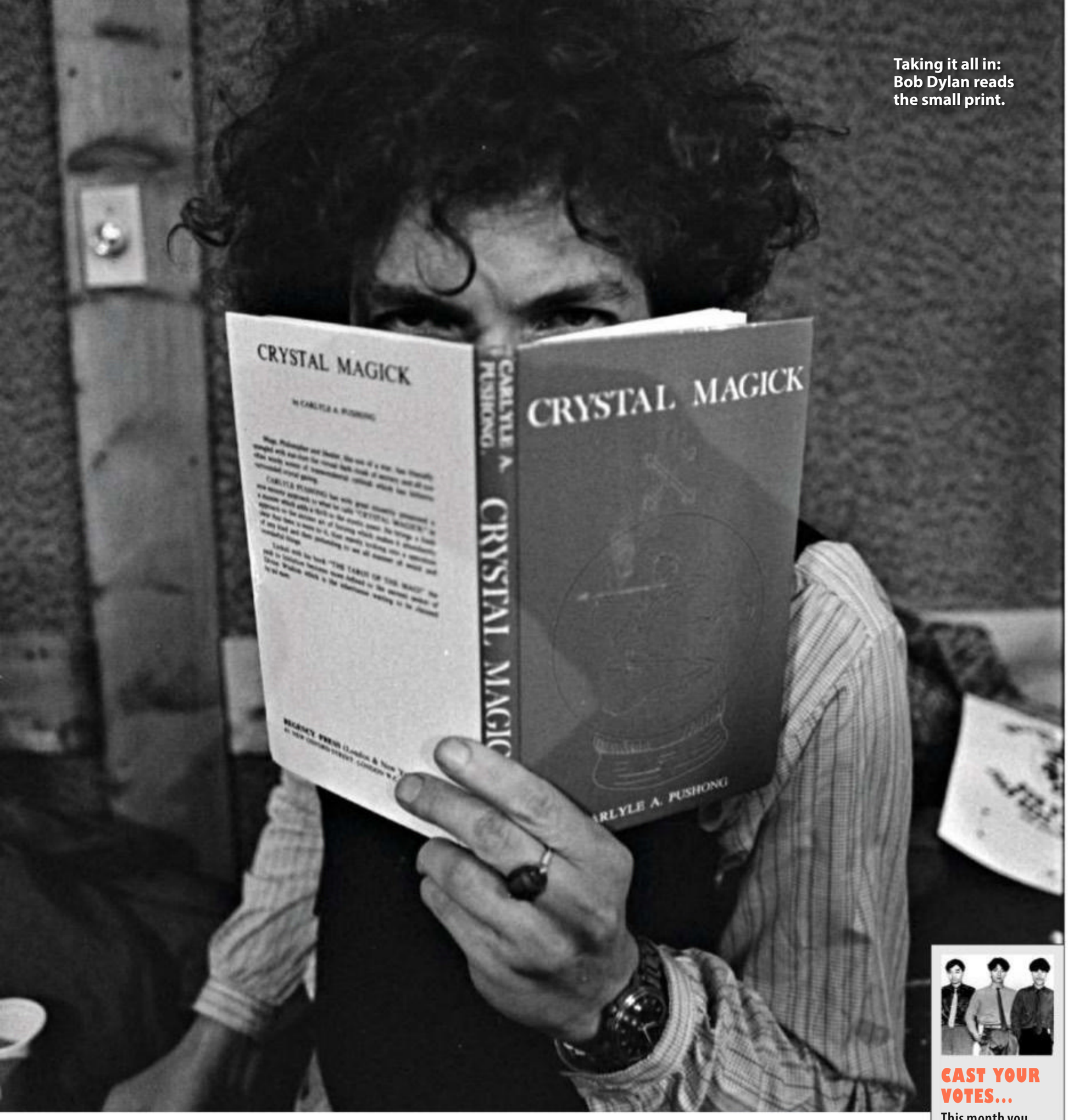
Absolute Radio

WEEKENDS ARE FUNNY

THE FRANK SKINNER SHOW
SATURDAYS, 8-11AM

THE JASON MANFORD SHOW
SUNDAYS, 8-11AM

DIGITAL RADIO, APP & SMART SPEAKER



Taking it all in: Bob Dylan reads the small print.

Dylan books

From the sheaves of big ideas and distorted facts, an essential Bobliography. Introduced by **Danny Eccleston**.

"SO… UH… the High Holy Days are over,' Bob announces, as we wrestle ardently on his bed. I'm awash in his sensuality. His eyes embrace me… His earring softly strokes the skin on my cheek…"

If you're of the opinion that where Bob Dylan is concerned there's no such thing as Too Much Information, maybe you haven't read backing singer Britta Lee Shain's Seeing The Real You At Last, "awash" as it is in similarly ripe detail of their '80s affair – less Behind The Shades; more 50 Shades Of Bob.

That said, Shain's startling memoir is not a great deal more 'specialist' than much of the extraordinary quantity of print lavished on Dylan as successive generations of fans, critics, biographers, academics, trashrats and former *amours* wrestle ardently with this most fascinating, confounding and culturally significant of artists. This month, MOJO's writers and readers have selected the 10 'best' books to emerge from the mêlée. The list comprises a mixture of favourites and landmark works encompassing straight biog, antic memoir, exploratory compendia, serious cultural history, *sui generis* intellectual adventure, and even a book by Dylan himself (but relax, it's not Revisionist Art, his rum 2013 collection of deep-fake magazine covers – which introduced initiates to his Sharon Stone obsession). Where appropriate, we've tried to flag up our preferred editions.

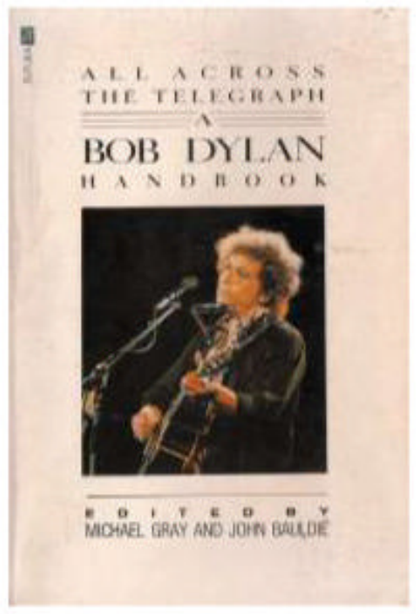
Given the vast and ever-expanding field – where recent entrants have included Why Dylan Matters, a Mary Beard-endorsed study of Dylan's interaction with the Greats of Classical Literature; plus a book of essays, The World Of Bob Dylan, starring a brilliant Ann Powers piece on Dylan's physicality (Britta Lee Shain would have views) – think of it as a place to start rather than The 10 Commandments. For Dylanology is a rabbit hole where the side-tunnels are often as seductive as the main drag. And getting stuck is half the fun.

Contributions: John Mulvey, Bill Prince, David Sheppard, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Mat Snow.

"Fans, critics, academics, trashrats and former *amours* wrestle with this most fascinating of artists."

CAST YOUR VOTES…

This month you chose your Top 10 Bob Dylan books. Next month we want your Yellow Magic Orchestra & Solo LPs Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy YMO & Solo'. We'll print the best comments.

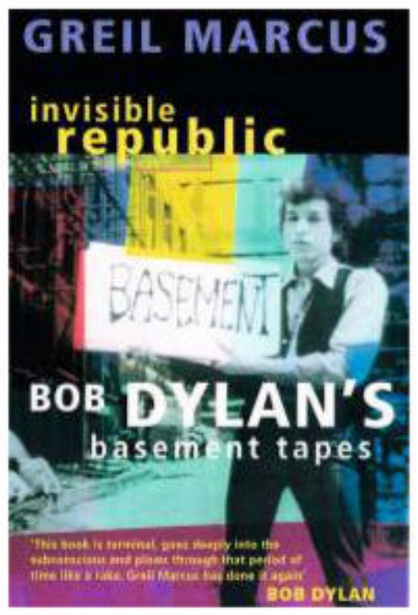


10 All Across The Telegraph

Ed. Michael Gray & John Bauldie (SPHERE)

You say: "Essential reading for anyone with even a passing interest in things Dylan." @dylan_mostly, via Twitter

With Clinton Heylin, two of north-west England's troika whose knowledge commended them to Dylan and his management as official scholars, Gray and Bauldie wrote critical analyses at book length, while from its 1981 start to Bauldie's tragic death in '96 they edited the Telegraph fanzine, which BD read voraciously. Two anthologies are key: Wanted Man has first person accounts of encounters and collaborations; this scrapbook veers from Christopher Ricks's academia to a Ken Pyne cartoon. *MSn*



4 Invisible Republic

Greil Marcus (PICADOR)

You say: "Some of the best Dylan books are not bios; this one set a template for Dylanology." LucyB, via e-mail

The haunting, haunted music Dylan made in Big Pink's basement with The Hawks/Band in 1967 becomes a portal through which Marcus is transported to The Old Weird America (this book's alternate title), where the characters and styles Dylan and co inhabit, interact and resonate with their antecedents. Along this "fugitive path" there is communion with song-collector Harry Smith and a rare articulation of the power and reach of music, beyond the skills and intentions of its makers. *DE*

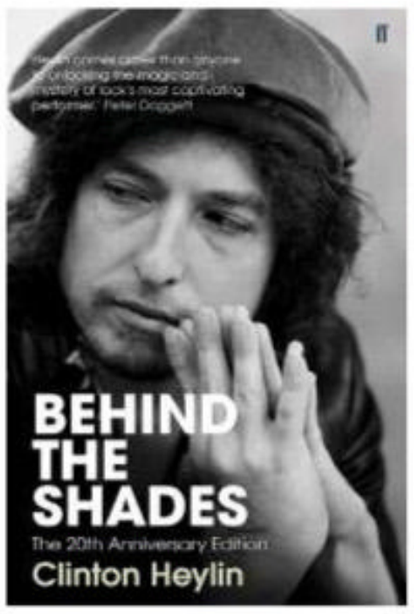
Ken Regan/Camera 5, Getty

9 Performing Artist I-III

Paul Williams (OMNIBUS)

You say: "Concentrates on Bob's live work… The depth is staggering." Philoats Yaza, on Facebook

While flashier critics debated best albums and revolutionary moments – big picture stuff – the Crawdaddy! founder was in the trenches with the Bobcats, glorying in the nuances and discrepancies in Dylan's performances, journeying deep into his evolving relationship with his own songs. The novelist Jonathan Lethem called the combined trilogy of volumes "one of the monumental accomplishments in music writing per se, bar none." As richly rewarding as it is formally forbidding: the Proust of Dylanology. *DE*



8 Behind The Shades

Clinton Heylin (FABER & FABER)

You say: "A captivating and thoroughly interesting read. Heylin is fastidious." Ben James, on Facebook

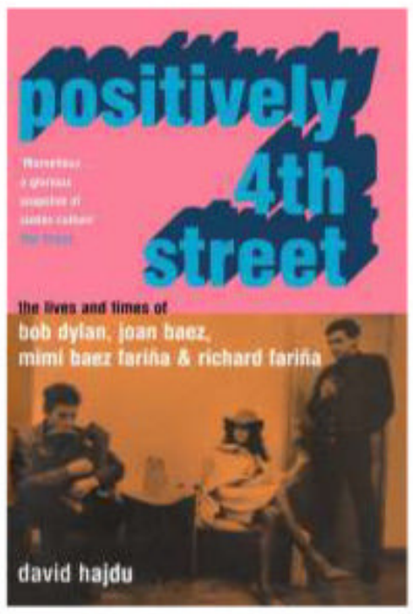
In a crowded field, Heylin is Dylan's Boswell and Behind The Shades his masterly overview. First published in 1991, 2011's edition adds 60,000 words and he's just published The Double Life Of Bob Dylan, the first of a new two-volume expanded bio. Like Dylan, Heylin's not finished – he's mused that he's akin to Captain Ahab pursuing Moby-Bob. Sometimes knocked for being a critic as much as a biographer, few, if any, have devoted as many years thoroughly poring over the artist's *oeuvre* and archives. *MSi*

7 Rolling Thunder Logbook

Sam Shepard (DA CAPO)

You say: "A surreal brain dump from a fly on the wall who wondered how he got there." @anearful, via Twitter

Playwright and Holy Modal Rounder Shepard was hired to generate an ad hoc film treatment of Dylan's 1975 tour/circus. "None of this has to connect," the singer advised. Ultimately, Dylan would marry the loose screenplay idea with themes from Marcel Carné's Les Enfants Du Paradis to create the rarely seen Renaldo And Clara. Shepard's Logbook, interspliced with Ken Regan's photographs, vividly captures the Felliniesque shenanigans. Shepard's cool, impressionist prose helped certify the Rolling Thunder Revue's near-mythic status. *DS*

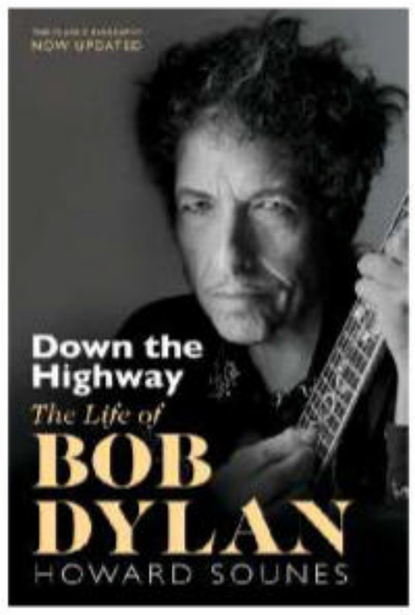


6 Positively 4th Street

David Hajdu (BLOOMSBURY)

You say: "A fascinating look at his social life during the folk stage of his career." martinlutherpresley, via Instagram

A biography of ambitious young Bohemians making their way in Greenwich Village, Hajdu's book is not universally loved by Dylan Ultras. Bob is given equal billing with Joan Baez and the Fariñas, and is more notable for his pursuit of the "illusion of artlessness" than nascent genius. Still, an evocatively written book about a remarkable scene and its romantic complexities, and shrewd on the construction of authenticity Dylanographers sometimes dodge. *JM*

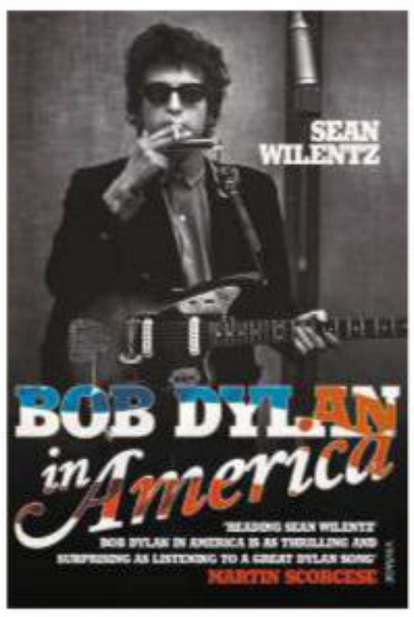


5 Down The Highway: The Life Of Bob Dylan

Howard Sounes (DOUBLEDAY)

You say: "A well-written, psychological adventure." Ofer Tal, on Facebook

Mocked by Clinton Heylin as "a former tabloid reporter AKA professional dirtdigger", Sounes brings those skills to a subject who's always hidden behind smoke and mirrors. A sensation on its 2001 publication for its discovery of Dylan's secret second marriage, Down The Highway stitches official records and myriad interviews into a narrative that humanises the artist. Choice nuggets include a tour of his Malibu mansion, on which Dylan lavished his riches and from which a tour bus offered blessed relief. *MSn*

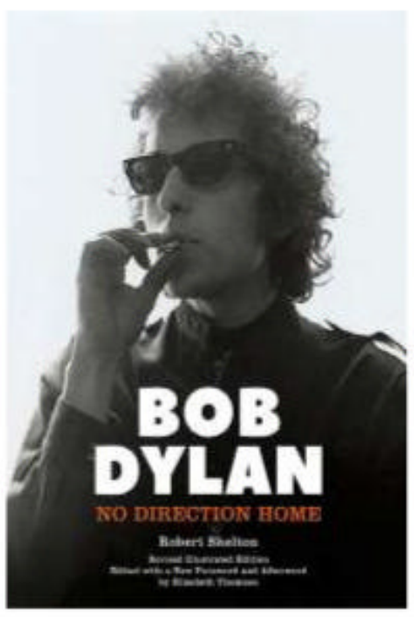


3 Bob Dylan In America

Sean Wilentz (VINTAGE)

You say: "A proper historian on Dylan's context and impact. Impeccable." Tim Vernon, via e-mail

There are dry books by scholars and intellectuals about Dylan, and there is Wilentz's dazzling portmanteau. Amid explorations of Dylan topics as diverse and chronologically polar as *Blonde On Blonde* and *Christmas In The Heart*, the author (a professor of US history at Princeton) dives majestically into his influences and context, makes the claims for Dylan as a historical figure stick, and sets out a compelling case for 1964 as a bigger watershed than '65 or '66. Laser-eyed, insightful and elegant. *DE*

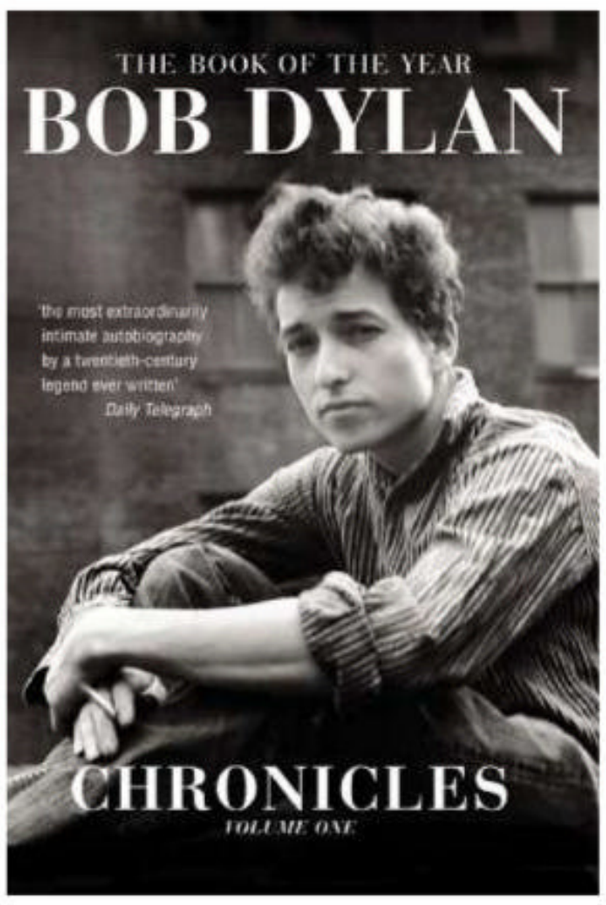


2 No Direction Home: The Life And Music Of Bob Dylan

Robert Shelton (OMNIBUS)

You say: "Helped me understand Dylan so much better." Jaapboots, via Twitter

It was Shelton's 1961 New York Times review that led to the 20-year-old Dylan's recording contract. This biography took 20 years to complete – first published in 1986 and again in 2011 and 2021. (The second edition is favoured by many Dylanologists.) What sets it apart, beyond the author's musicological grasp, is Dylan's presence: the 1966 airplane interview touches on drug use, problems with Albert Grossman, going electric etc. *MSi*



1 Chronicles: Volume One

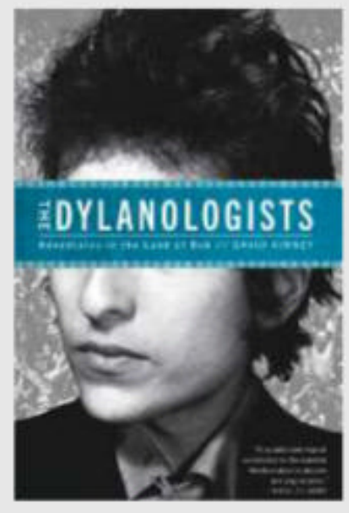
Bob Dylan (SIMON & SCHUSTER)

You say: "For its meandering, poetic, sometimes hazy-with-the-truth version of his initiation into the NY folk scene and beyond." Everlearningdad, via Twitter

Who knew that Part 1 of the three-part memoir deal he signed would be so remarkable? Dylan could have made it all up, shown nothing of himself – this was 2004, a year before Scorsese's revelatory No Direction Home doc. Instead, it's plain-spoken, thoughtful, self-analytical, cranky, enthusiastic and unputdownable. Starting and ending in New York, 1961 – Dylan's description of his training ground is almost mythically noir – there's flashbacks to his Midwest childhood and, in the middle, individual chapters on *New Morning* and *Oh Mercy*. Things we might consider milestones – going electric at Newport – are ignored in favour of seeing the club where Bill Haley first played or enthusing about characters like producer Bob Johnston and wrestler Gorgeous George. It's a portrait of the artist as a young sponge, taking it all in – the Gaslight poker games, the girls, book collections of the bohemians he dossed with – and absolutely fascinating. *SS*

NOW DIG THIS

Before heading into the further reaches of the Bobverse, heed the example of The Dylanologists (Simon & Schuster, 2017), David Kinney's exploration of Dylan's hyper-fixated fanbase. Long famed for their presenteeism (particularly during the frenzied mid-years of the Never-ending Tour, much of it recounted here), Kinney's interviewees are not simply road rats in search of a brush with the master's garment, but lucid witnesses to what it means to be in thrall to a voice that somehow captures their own. Published before the advent of Genius, The Dylanologists denies us their views on crowd-sourced critical theory (the bane of any interaction between present-day Bobcats), but otherwise this stands up as an absorbing, non-sneery guide to the contact-high delivered by rock's most absent idol. Conversely, for the dark side of Dylan obsession, watch Tangled Up With Dylan: The Ballad Of A.J. Weberman. This weird encounter with Dylan's superfan-turned-nemesis is on BBC iPlayer for another six months. *BP*



Blossom time: Paul McCartney and the "magical" process.

Here, There And Everywhere

McCartney talks through his back pages, 1956 to 2020, in 154 alphabetically arranged songs. By **Tom Doyle**.

Paul McCartney

★★★★

The Lyrics

ALLEN LANE. £75

THERE'S A tiny photograph tucked into a corner on page 11 of this super-weighty, 874-page double volume McCartney lyric anthology-cum-memoir that manages to capture the excitement of being a young Beatle in London – a blurry snapshot of the Post Office tower being built, as seen through the attic window of the Asher family's house in Wimpole Street where Paul was living in 1964. "There was a real sense of renewal and anything goes in London," McCartney enthuses.

Other old photos serve a similar purpose here: a weird double exposure shot of McCartney in John Lennon's Weybridge garden, which captures the trippiness of the summer of '67 as well as any of their songs did; another of Paul at the wheel of his Aston Martin, parked up and lost somewhere on a drive in the Home Counties, guitar in hand, writing Two Of Us, and underlining the lyric's documentary qualities.

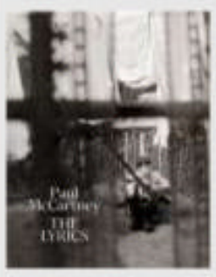
Almost every picture tells a story, and that's before we get to the words for these 154 selected songs and accompanying first-person narratives, told over five years by McCartney to poet Paul Muldoon. McCartney has always been averse to a straightforward autobiography, though has skirted around the idea before, with his contributions to his pal Barry Miles's 1997 official biography, Many Years From Now. But where that book seemed designed to recalibrate Macca as the arty Beatle and pick through Lennon/McCartney co-writes to point out who exactly did what, The Lyrics employs the songs to spark memories.

At the age of 79 – and five months older than Joe Biden – McCartney admits that some of his recollections are "a good bit hazier" than others, and that when reading through the lyrics it was often challenging to remember how and why he'd constructed them. But, repeatedly, he emphasises how, as the old song goes, the creative process is both "magical" and a "mystery" to him. Nonetheless, he does reveal some of his tricks along the way – descending chord progressions with ascending melodies being a favourite.

Even with the inevitable repetitions – we seem to revisit the Woolton Fete in 1957, and the day he and Lennon met, again and again – there are revelations aplenty. Addressing Fixing A Hole, he admits that after first taking LSD a "little blue hole" appeared to him whenever he closed his eyes (he can still occasionally see it today). Golden Earth Girl, from 1993's *Off The Ground*, he confesses is a "nod" towards Yoko's gnomic style of nature poetry. Other influences are more outward-looking – Junk and Steptoe And Son, Maxwell's Silver Hammer and the Moors Murders. Elsewhere, of Wings' Rock Show from 1975's *Venus And Mars*, he admits, "I'm a little bit embarrassed by this song". Furthermore, "if pushed", he says, Here, There And Everywhere is his all-time favourite.

Throughout, McCartney – growing more and more relaxed and open as the years go by – is a great, digressive storyteller, and a really funny one, too. When, in the second volume, he gets to With A Little Help From My Friends, he admits that he'd pulled back from overt cheekiness: "I couldn't say, 'What do you see when you turn out the light? Your dick.' It just doesn't scan."

"Writing a song is like talking to a psychiatrist."
PAUL McCARTNEY



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- The mischievous nature of Macca's Beatles-era writing is further explored. As it turns out, one change of vowel reveals the true X-rated intent behind the Lovely Rita line, "Give us a wink and make me think of you."
- On '71's *Ram*, Paul famously had a pop at John and Yoko in Too Many People. In The Lyrics, he explains why: "So much of what they held to be truth was crap. 'War is over'? Well no, it isn't."
- The brilliant I Don't Know from 2018's *Egypt Station* captured McCartney in a moment of doubt and pain, revealed here to be caused by family drama and feelings of parental inadequacy. "Writing a song is like talking to a psychiatrist," he says.

©Linda-McCartney

Academy Events present

DECEMBER 2021

FRI 03 STOKE THE SUGARMILL SOLD OUT

SAT 04 DERBY THE VENUE SOLD OUT

SUN 05 GLASGOW THE GARAGE

MON 06 EDINBURGH
THE LIQUID ROOM

THU 09 SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY

FRI 10 LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY

SAT 11 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ

MON 13 NOTTINGHAM
RESCUE ROOMS

TUE 14 CARDIFF TRAMSHED

THU 16 LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY

FRI 17 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE

SAT 18 BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY SOLD OUT

WED 22 & THU 23 LONDON
O_2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON

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25 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
26 EDINBURGH THE LIQUID ROOM
28 ABERDEEN LEMON TREE
30 GLASGOW SWG3

FEBRUARY
01 LEEDS UNIVERSITY REFECTORY
02 BUCKLEY THE TIVOLI
04 LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY
05 SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY
06 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
08 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
09 COVENTRY EMPIRE
11 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
12 LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY
13 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE
14 SWANSEA SIN CITY
16 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
18 BATH THE FORUM
19 SOUTHAMPTON O2 GUILDHALL
20 BRIGHTON THE DOME
22 EXETER UNIVERSITY
23 READING THE HEXAGON
25 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY
26 FOLKESTONE LEA CLIFFS HALL
27 LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON

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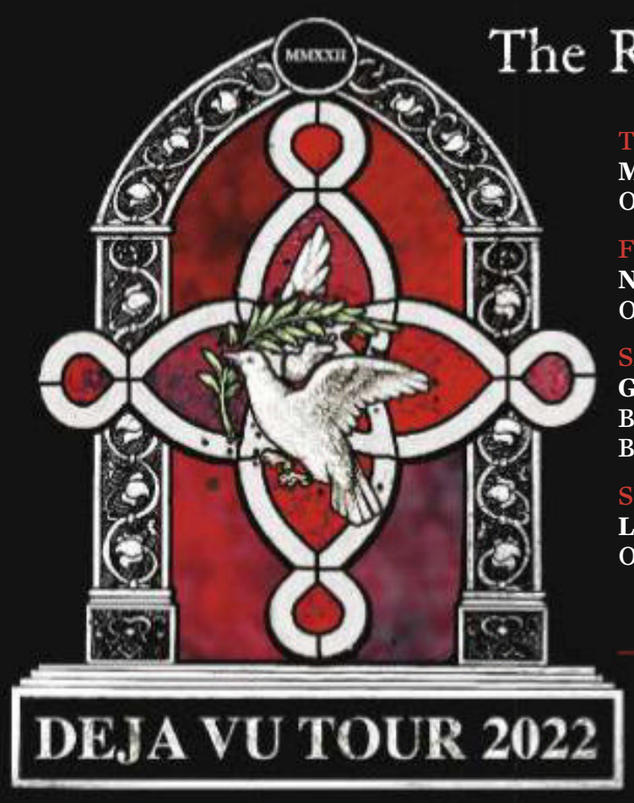

THU 14th APRIL
MANCHESTER
O_2 RITZ

FRI 15th APRIL
NEWCASTLE
O_2 CITY HALL

SAT 16th APRIL
GLASGOW
BARROWLAND
BALLROOM

SUN 17th APRIL
LEEDS
O_2 ACADEMY

TUE 19th APRIL
NOTTINGHAM
ROCK CITY

WED 20th APRIL
BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY

THU 21st APRIL
BRISTOL
O_2 ACADEMY

FRI 22nd
& SAT 23rd APRIL
LONDON
O_2 SHEPHERD'S
BUSH EMPIRE

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ALKALINE TRIO

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01 **NEWCASTLE** O_2 CITY HALL
02 **GLASGOW** O_2 ACADEMY
04 **MANCHESTER** O_2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE SOLD OUT
05 **BIRMINGHAM** O ACADEMY SOLD OUT
06 **LONDON** O_2 ACADEMY BRIXTON

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An Academy Events & Friends presentation
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Sleeper

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TheitGirl

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SAT 23RD APR 2022	GLASGOW SWG3
THU 28TH APR 2022	BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
FRI 29TH APR 2022	COVENTRY HMV EMPIRE
SAT 30TH APR 2022	MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
SUN 1ST MAY 2022	NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP
FRI 6TH MAY 2022	LONDON ROUNDHOUSE
SAT 7TH MAY 2022	CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

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SEPTEMBER
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23 **NEWCASTLE** O_2 City Hall*+
24 **SHEFFIELD** O_2 Academy+
29 **MANCHESTER** O_2 Ritz*+

OCTOBER
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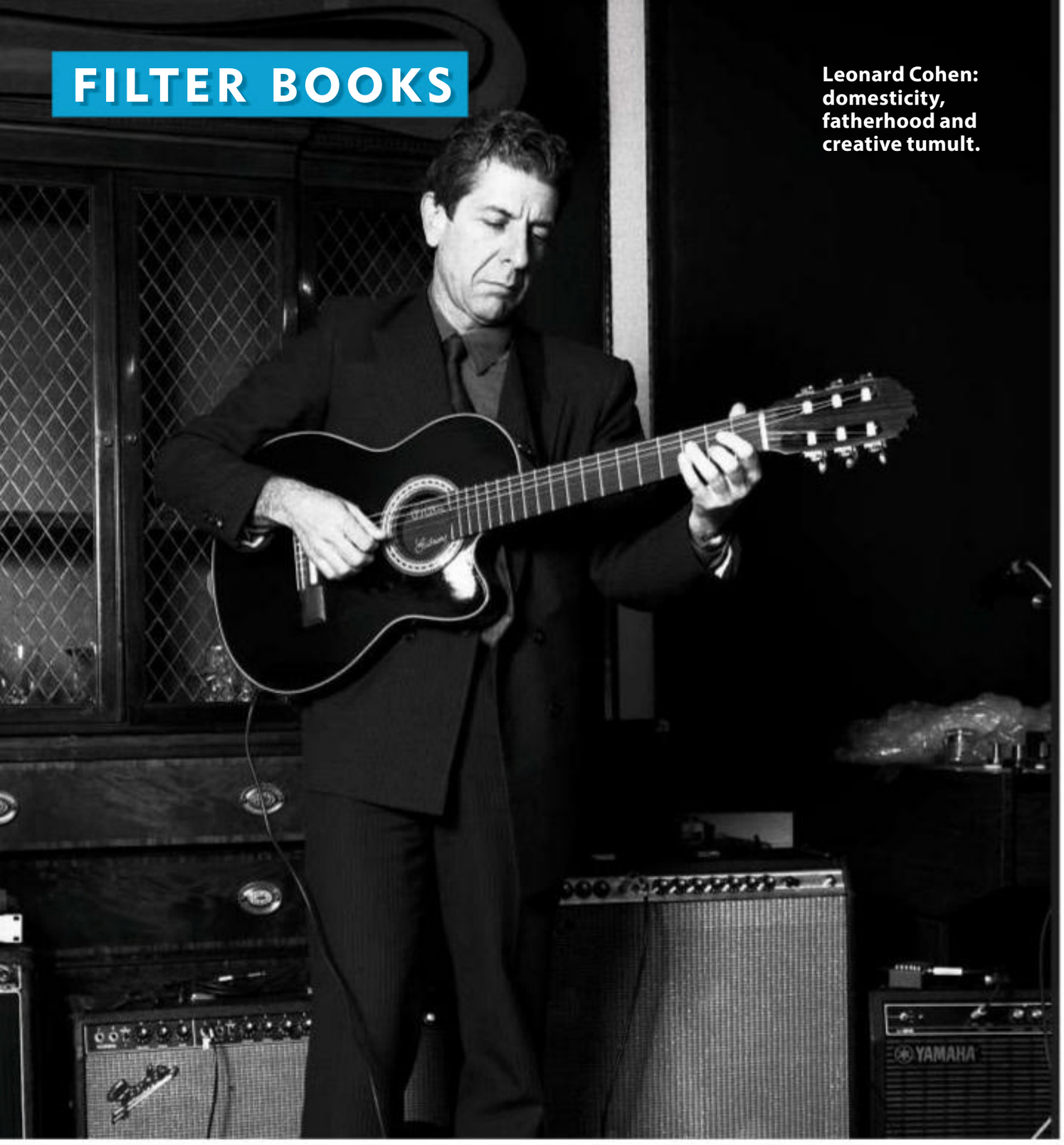
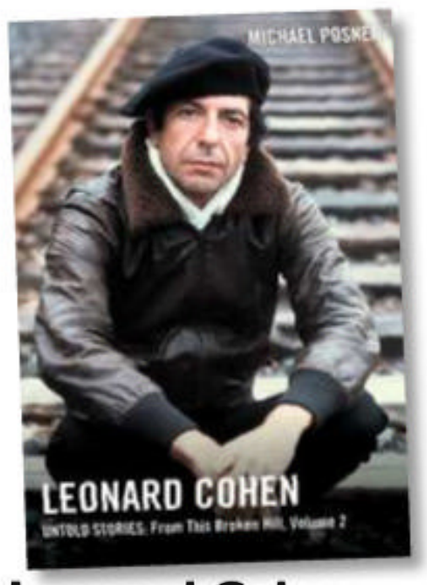
02 **CARDIFF** Tramshed+
05 **NORWICH** UEA+
07 **BOURNEMOUTH** O_2 Academy*+
08 **BIRMINGHAM** O_2 Academy*+
13 **LEICESTER** O_2 Academy*+
14 **LONDON** O_2 Forum Kentish Town*+
20 **LIVERPOOL** O_2 Academy*+
21 **GLASGOW** O_2 Academy*+
22 **EDINBURGH** O_2 Academy*+

TICKETMASTER.CO.UK & ALL USUAL AGENTS



Leonard Cohen: domesticity, fatherhood and creative tumult.



Leonard Cohen, Untold Stories: From This Broken Hill, Volume 2

★★★★

Michael Posner

SIMON & SCHUSTER. £25

Second instalment of oral history hits singer's squeezed middle years.

"I wish I could just say everything in one word," Leonard Cohen once said. "I hate all the things that can happen between the beginning of a sentence and the end." He probably wouldn't have appreciated Michael Posner's second biographical document, then, a tumble of vivid gossip and unreliable memories from friends and lovers. Covering 1971 to 1988, the narrative is marked by Cohen's turbulent relationship with Suzanne Elrod, domesticity and fatherhood, his interest in Buddhism, and an almost monotonous stream of adoring young women. There is creative tumult – Columbia's rejection of *Various Positions*, Phil Spector's *Death Of A Ladies' Man* gunplay – but the eyewitness approach also leads to brilliant bathos, such as Cohen's fury at a parking ticket, or a summit with Bob Dylan: "they had absolutely nothing to say to each other." From This Broken Hill entertainingly builds Cohen's world around him, finding a man struggling through the middle of his life's sentence.

Victoria Segal

Getty

Where The Devil Don't Stay: Traveling The South With The Drive-By Truckers

★★★★

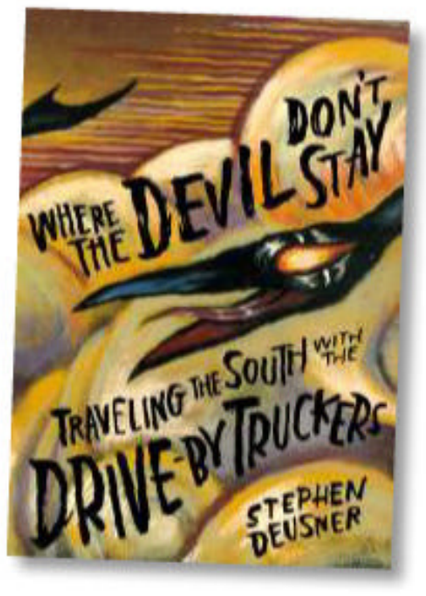
Stephen Deusner

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS. £25

The Southern States explored by one of their finest rock bands.

The Drive-By Truckers have covered a lot of territory these past 25 years, but plenty of it comes down to an oft-quoted line from 2001, the "duality of the Southern thing". It's also Stephen Deusner's jump-off point for his clever and engaging book: a history of a left-leaning Southern rock band, alive to the complexities and iniquities of their home. "Their music makes you feel OK to be bitter about the place," observes Jason Isbell, who served a drunken and maritally fraught apprenticeship in one of the band's best line-ups. Deusner tours the South with the band as fully-engaged interviewees, visiting key Truckers destinations and tackling everything from Lynyrd Skynyrd to Confederate statues as he goes. And if the textual focus on individual songs can sometimes get a bit dense, at least it'll keep sending you back to that rich and hefty discography; a decent trade-off.

John Mulvey



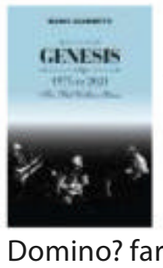
Genesis – 1975 To 2021: The Phil Collins Years

★★★★

Mario Giammetti

KINGMAKER. £24.99

How three nice boys became monsters of pop-rock.



With the genteel trio of Phil Collins, Tony Banks and Mike Rutherford basking in the nostalgic glow of their Last Domino? farewell bash, Mario Giammetti delivers this second volume of band history – just one of 15 (yes, *15*) Genesis-related books he has written. Few other bands have managed to navigate the fickle tides of pop fashion quite as smoothly as Genesis – and no other has prospered so mightily after losing first its iconic lead singer, then its lead guitarist. Politely barging past disco, punk and synth pop, the band dominated the pop charts of the late 20th century. The blip came only when Collins took a sabbatical, and the unknown Ray Wilson sang through a flop album and tour (an episode that has clearly traumatised the stand-in). Like Giammetti's first volume, much of the tale is told in quotes gleaned from extensive, frank interviews with the players. With excellent pics, good design and avoiding fanboy worship, this is close to definitive.

John Bungey

My Life In Dire Straits

★★★

John Illsley

BANTAM PRESS. £20

Band's bassist says, "We went as far as you can go without being Elvis or The Beatles."

If Mark Knopfler's foreword seems reticent, he has little to fear from Illsley's gently written, self-reflective book. Its key message is that fame costs, or certainly cost Illsley. "[My kids] knew the nanny better than they knew me", he reflects after Dire Straits' final gig in October 1992, while the epic tour for 1985's ubiquitous chart-topper *Brothers In Arms* wrecked his first marriage. The Straits' Deptford, south London flatshare is beautifully evoked (pals Squeeze lend their PA for a gig), then rapid-onset fame ushers in crowd riots in Italy, badly bootlegged T-shirts ('Sutlans Of Swim'), and encounters with Bob Dylan, Max Bygraves and Stevie Nicks. Though Illsley tiptoes around the Knopfler brothers' fall-out, he's great on the eye of the storm and its aftermath. He is also savvy about considerations when recruiting new bandmates: "Can I face this guy at breakfast for 250 mornings a year?"

James McNair

How To Be A Rock Star

★★★

Shaun Ryder, with Luke Bainbridge

ALLEN & UNWIN. £13.99

Cartoon caner turned-Gogglebox-royalty's guide to surviving "Madchester".

Stealing his opening gambit from Goodfellas, Ryder misquotes, "As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a rock star." Ryder and his sextet of Salford scallies, including saucer-eyed dancer Bez, vaulted '80s Manchester and swapped drug deals for platinum discs. Faithfully transcribed, highlights include the Mondays' 1986 US tour, featuring a rider of crack and guns. The career guide format suffers editorially from lazyitis and repetition ("we've been going four times as long as The Beatles"). A leaked fax from a riled promoter in Rennes bemoaning a variety of on-tour shenanigans merely tantalises, but Ryder's bonhomie makes Rock Star easy to dip into, if only latterly conceding an honest picture of an accidental star with thyroid problems and tattooed-on hair. The promised "sage advice" ("Rehearsing's where you get tight… 808 State were named after a drum machine…") simply doesn't deliver.

Andrew Collins

Lightning Striking

★★★★

Lenny Kaye

WHITE RABBIT. £20

Patti Smith's guitarist details rock's "10 transformative moments".

As a sometime Creem contributor and *Nuggets* compiler, not to mention Patti Smith foil, Kaye is generously qualified to ruminate on the seismic eruptions in rock'n'roll's backstory. Yet, you do wonder how even this beloved lifer could inject fresh or worthwhile perspective on such abundantly documented phenomena as index entries "Memphis 1954" and "Liverpool 1962". Somehow, he manages, chronicling each with rare depth of understanding. Initially, for instance, he'll pinpoint how, even before Elvis Presley, country and R&B "both drank from the same fountain", sharing repertoire and key vocabulary such as "boogie" and, indeed, "rock". Increasingly, the NYC fanboy becomes an inside-track observer, obviously in the interpersonal patchworking circa New York City 1975, but also in Seattle 1991, making sense of grunge's Green River/Soundgarden roots, aptly pegging Nirvana as "runt of the litter" and revealing the traumas of amigo Eddie Vedder. Told with an unflagging jive energy, Kaye's musical lifetime is a ripping yarn.

Andrew Perry

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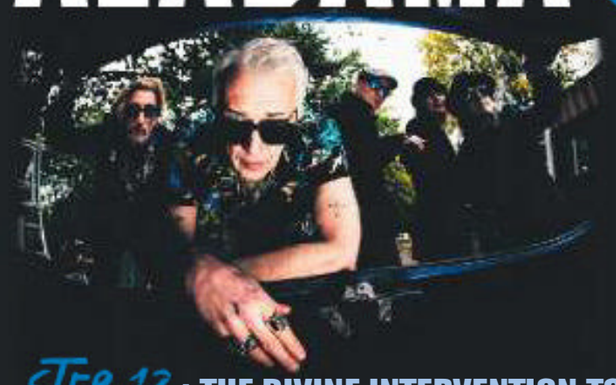

STEP 13 : THE DIVINE INTERVENTION TOUR

MARCH 2022
18 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
19 LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY

APRIL 2022
03 BOURNEMOUTH
THE OLD FIRE STATION
07 NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP
16 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
28 OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
29 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
30 LONDON
O_2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

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PLUS GUESTS

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13 OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
14 LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY SOLD OUT
15 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
16 LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY
21 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
22 LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY
23 NEWCASTLE O_2 CITY HALL
29 LONDON
O_2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE

EXTRA DATE ADDED
DUE TO PHENOMENAL DEMAND
SAT 12 FEBRUARY 2022
LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY

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THU 21ST APRIL
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
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BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 30TH APRIL
BOURNEMOUTH
O_2 ACADEMY

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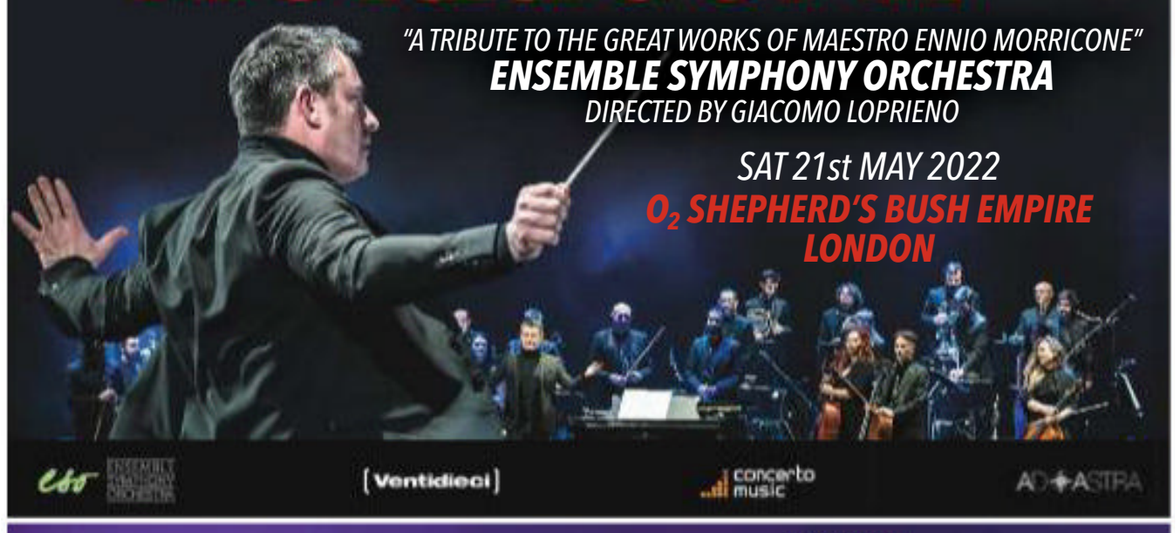
SAT 21st MAY 2022
O_2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE
LONDON



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THE WEDDING PRESENT
seamonsters

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THU 18 NOV 2021 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
THU 25 NOV 2021 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 27 NOV 2021 LONDON O_2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN
FRI 15 APR 2022 OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2
SUN 17 APR 2022 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE2
SAT 21 MAY 2022 LIVERPOOL ARTS CLUB

SAT 28 MAY 2022 LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY

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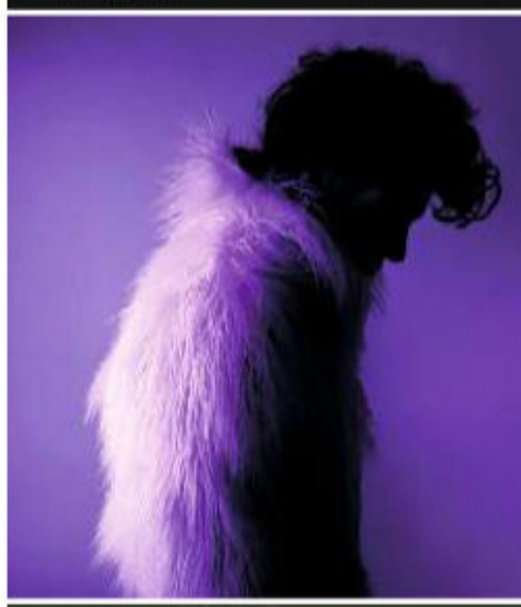

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SOUNDS THAT HISTORY SAVED ARTISTS AGENCY PRESENTS

PRINCE TRIBUTE
ENDORPHINMACHINE
PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

SAT 29 JAN 2022
BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
FRI 04 FEB 2022
NEWCASTLE O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 12 FEB 2022
LONDON O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON
SAT 26 FEB 2022
LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 5 MAR 2022
SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2

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ELVIS FRONTED NIRVANA

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DECEMBER 2021
FRI 17 OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 18 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
JANUARY 2022
FR 07 LONDON
O_2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN
SAT 08 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY

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THE SMYTHS

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PERFORMING THE ALBUM IN ITS ENTIRETY PLUS THEIR GREATEST HITS

35th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

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SHEFFIELD
O_2 ACADEMY2
Sat 11 Dec 2021
BIRMINGHAM
O_2 ACADEMY2
Thu 16 Dec 2021
NEWCASTLE
O_2 ACADEMY
plus guests
OLD RED EYES
ACOUSTIC TRIBUTE TO PAUL HEATON
Sat 18 Dec 2021
GLASGOW
GARAGE

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ANTARCTIC MONKEYS

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

NATIONAL TOUR

SAT 13 NOV 2021
LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 20 NOV 2021
LONDON
O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON SOLD OUT
SAT 27 NOV 2021
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2
TUE 28 DEC 2021
LONDON
O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON EXTRA DATE
SAT 15 JAN 2022
BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
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Deep wounds: Dinosaur Jr at the Anti-Club, Los Angeles, 1987 (from left) J Mascis, Murph, Lou Barlow.

Heal the pain

Dysfunctional family drama disguised as a rock documentary. By **Keith Cameron**.

Freakscene – The Story Of Dinosaur Jr.

★★★★

Dir: Philipp Reichenheim

MUNRO FILMS. C/ST

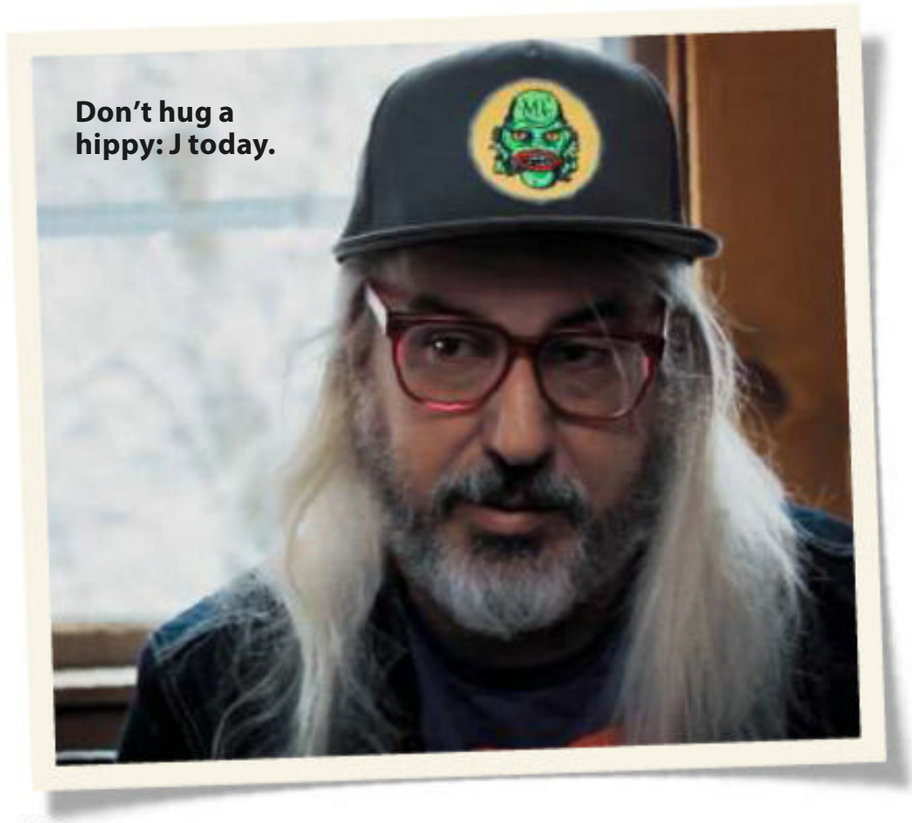
PUNK VALIDATED alienation from regular society, but when its participants felt alienated from each other there really was nowhere left to go. Few bands have been so defined by their passive-aggressive internal dynamic as Dinosaur Jr., whose signature anthem Freak Scene still offers the best explanation for the malaise: "The weirdness flows between us." Now the song's near namesake documentary offers corroboration for that diagnosis.

Take drummer Emmett Jefferson 'Patrick' Murphy III, who after a gruelling seven-week stint on 1993's Lollapalooza, worn down by "all the negativity" and still earning no more than he did before Dinosaur Jr. joined the major leagues, opens up to band leader J Mascis. "He said, 'Well man, if it's not fun any more, maybe you shouldn't do it," Murph says. "And I remember thinking: 'Dude, when has it *ever* been fun?'" On this much, the pair could agree. "I don't know where people get this idea that it's supposed to be fun to play music," chuckles Mascis early in the film. "I guess it never occurred to us. Music was really important and we wanted to do it."

One Dinosaur Jr. gig, at Naugatuck, Connecticut in December 1987, ended with Mascis physically attacking Barlow. The fracas is captured on shaky handcam footage (a brief clip was used in Sonic Youth's Teen Age Riot video), a precious moment in this documentary's archive visual collage that pungently evokes the trio's gasoline-fumed early days in and around Amherst, Massachusetts. Dinosaur got banned from every club in their hometown due to playing at obnoxiously loud volume. "To me they were the perfect band," says Kim Gordon, with whom Dinosaur enjoyed a briefly happy tour in 1986. "We didn't care if anybody listened to us," says bassist Lou Barlow. "You're not there to play to an audience, you're there to assault people."

Such antagonism was nourishing but destructive: Mascis fired Barlow in 1990 ("I was becoming a negative force… he did the right thing"), Murph quit in 1993, and Mascis ditched the band name in 1997 amid dwindling public interest. Their unlikely 2005 reunion is explained by the individuals making peace with their inner selves as well as each other – also that year, Mascis released an album of devotional hymns to Amma, the Hindu guru renowned for hugging her followers – and their ongoing bond's healing impact on Murph is especially poignant.

Freakscene suffers from too many talking heads shouldering the narrative, presumably a byproduct of the film's lengthy gestation plus the fact that, although director Reichenheim is J's brother-in-law, the now grey-haired Dino guru retains his inscrutability. "I'm bad at remembering what I felt like in the past," he admits, driving around Amherst's frozen streets. Feelings, and the struggle to articulate them, are what's driven Mascis for over 35 years. Fortunately, his bandmates stuck with him, and it's Barlow who ultimately cuts to the heart of the matter: "Maybe someday people will understand the wall of sound we make is as important as the wall of sound that the Ramones made, or The Velvet Underground made."



Don't hug a hippy: J today.

Joseph Henderson

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- J Mascis taught himself drums by playing along to hardcore albums with the speed switched from 33 rpm to 45. "I was just sick of all the hippies and their drugs," he explains.
- Matt Dillon directed the video for 1992's Get Me, in the course of which he met J's dentist father who presented him with a business card that read: "Dinosaur Snr."
- 2015's 30th anniversary gigs in New York featured guest musicians and vocalists including Frank Black, Charles Bradley, Kim Gordon, Bob Mould, Henry Rollins, Kevin Shields and Kurt Vile.
- J's wife Luisa describes the band thus: "It's like an ongoing song. I haven't figured out which song it is, or what it's about, but it's an ongoing daily song."

"I don't know where people get this idea it's supposed to be fun to play music."
J MASCIS

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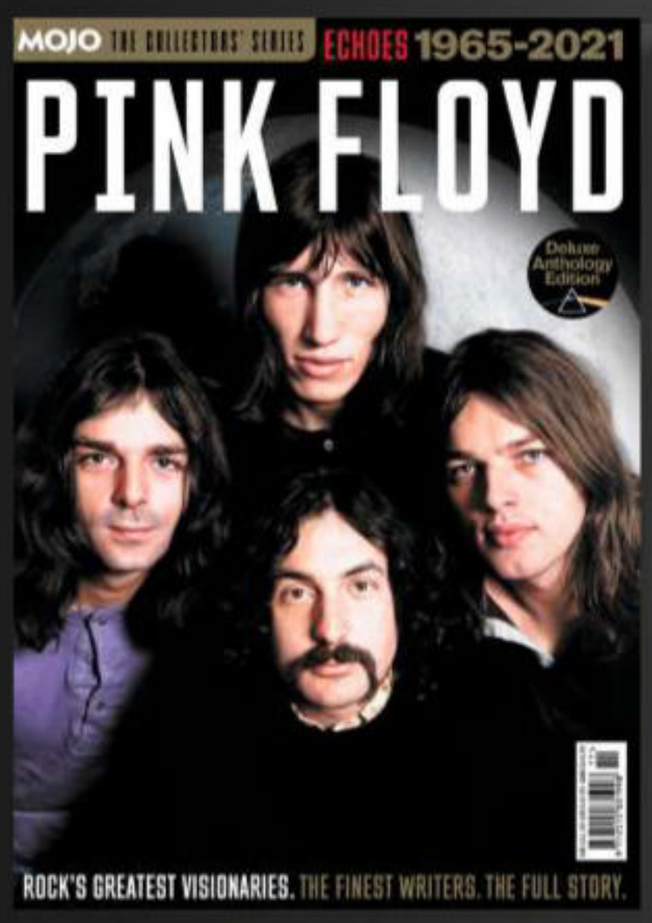

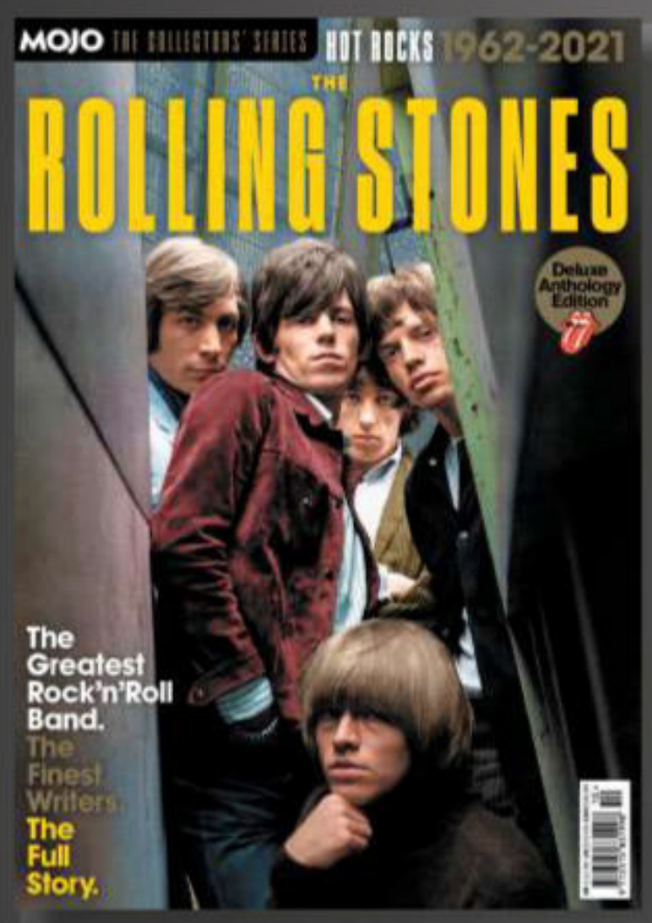

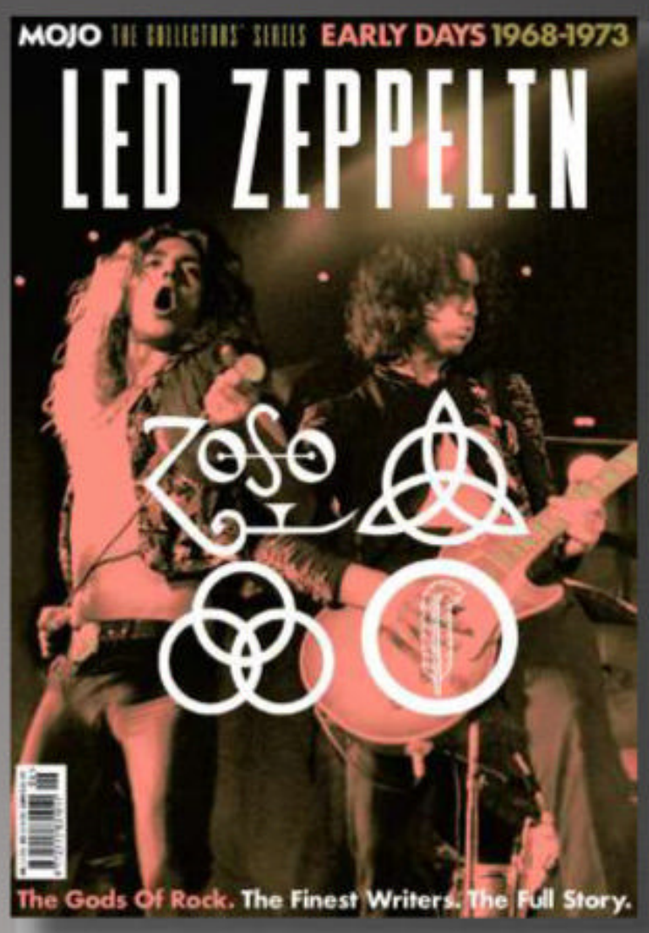

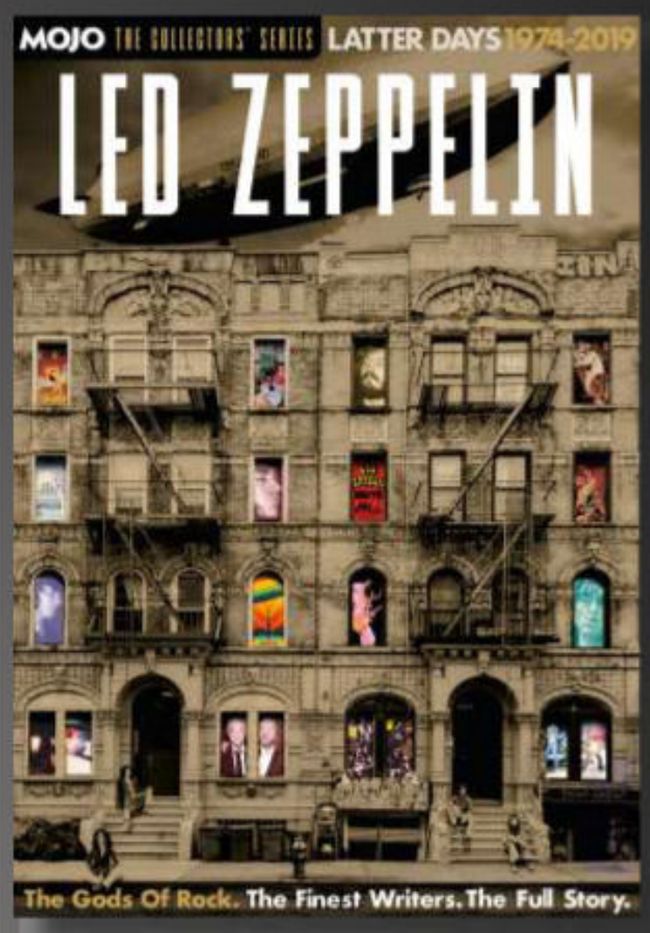

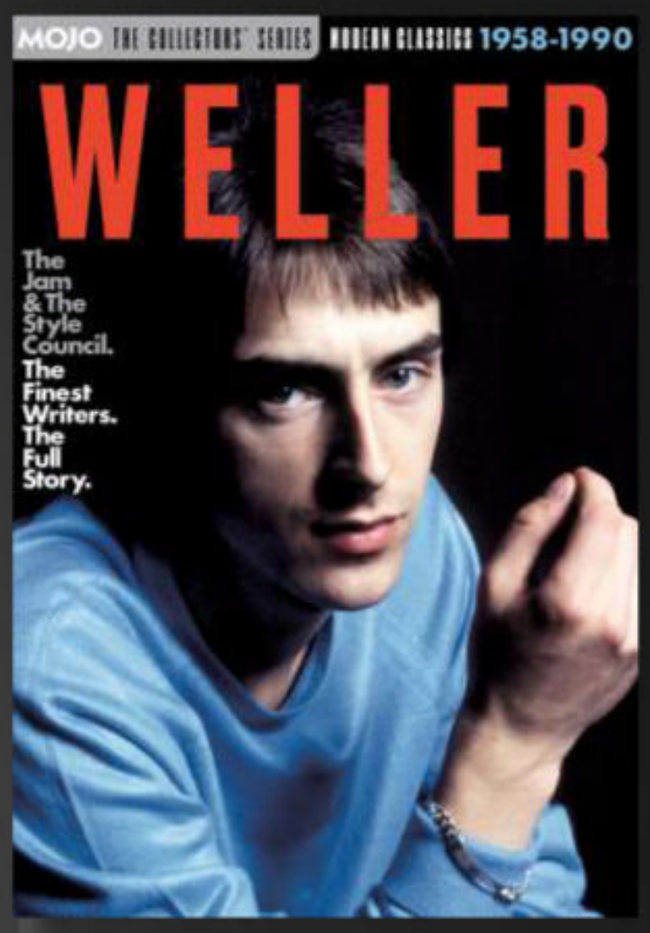

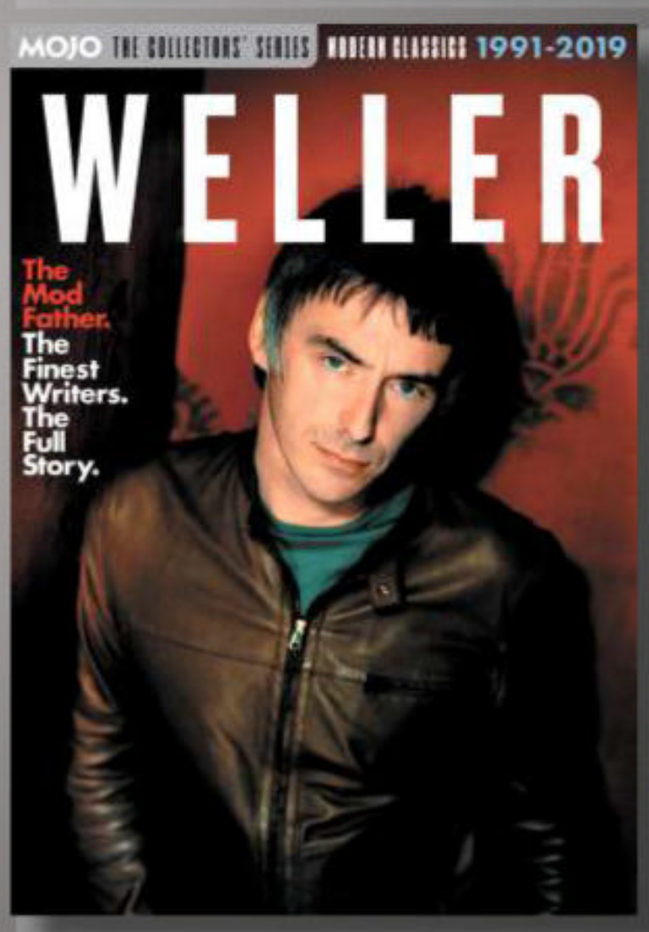

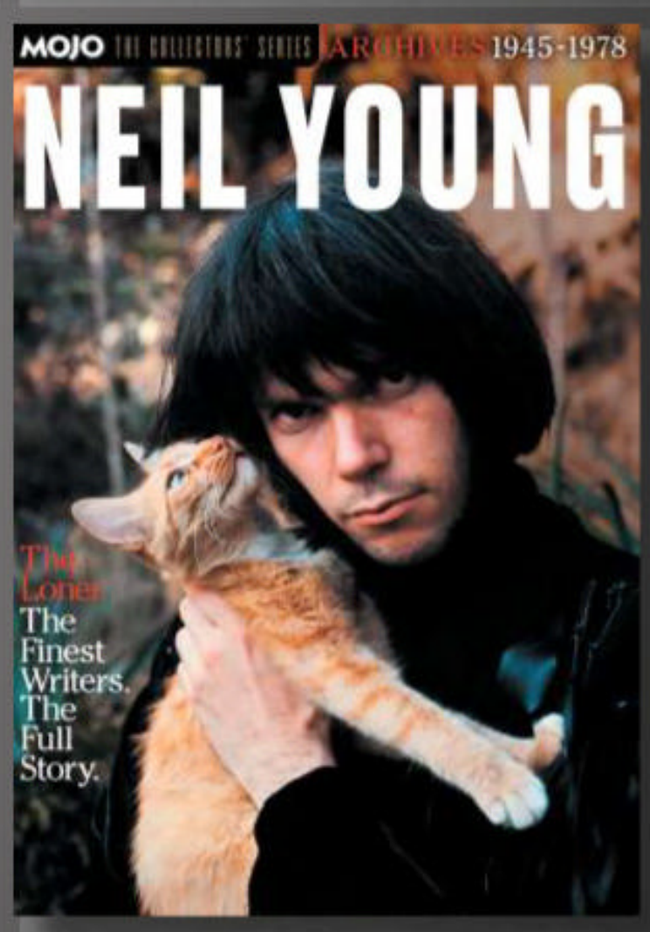

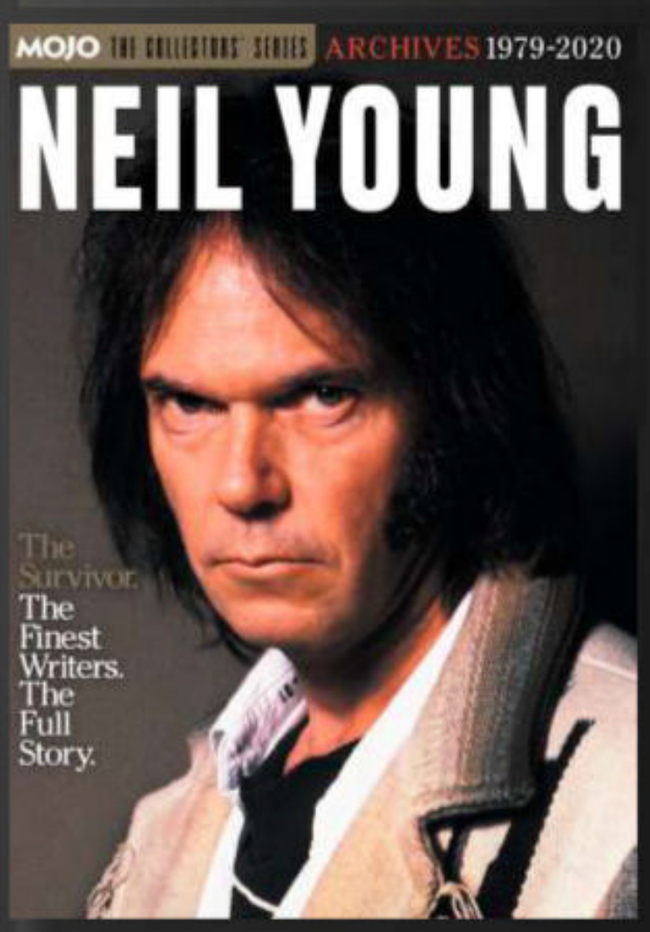

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Paddy Moloney, Chieftain in chief, in June 1973.

THE LEGACY

The Album: *The Long Black Veil* (RCA Victor, 1995)

The Sound: Cynics may have dismissed Moloney's collaborative genius as commercial opportunism, but it's impossible to resist the sheer joy of his greatest triumph, consummately setting some unlikely partners in a traditional idiom. Ry Cooder and Mark Knopfler notably star, The Rolling Stones play Rocky Road To Dublin, and we even hear Sting singing in Irish.

The Ace Of Pipering

Chieftains piper and prime mover **Paddy Moloney** died on October 12.

WHAM! CLAIMED to be the first western band to play in China in 1985, but The Chieftains beat them to it two years earlier, an achievement due primarily to the charm, determination and vision of their founder, leader and driving force, Paddy Moloney. It was just one of many cultural barriers Moloney shattered in a momentous 60-year career as whistle player, uilleann piper, composer and seminal figure in the global popularisation of Irish traditional music.

Born in the north Dublin suburb of Donnycarney in 1938, he grew up in a family steeped in traditional music, was taught by one of the all-time great pipers, Leo Rowsome, and wrote tunes from the age of 12. While training as an accountant, he was recruited by composer Seán Ó Riada to play whistle and pipes with Ceoltóirí Chualann, an experimental "folk orchestra" setting classical arrangements to traditional tunes. Garech Browne, a party-loving Guinness heir with a passion for traditional music, founded Claddagh Records and asked Moloney to assemble musicians for a recording which, in 1964, became the first self-titled Chieftains album. Ever the entrepreneur, Moloney became Claddagh's MD and house producer, while painstakingly shaping The Chieftains' unique sound with sumptuous, symphonic arrangements.

A diminutive figure with an effortlessly cheery smile, Moloney was a brilliant piper of boundless musical ambition. He revelled in a cheeky stage persona notable for rambling introductions, yet he was also a perfectionist and, off-stage, a shrewd and hard-headed operator teeming with ideas. In 1975 he formed a stormy alliance with brash New York manager/promoter Jo Lustig, whose first act was to book The Chieftains into London's Royal Albert Hall. With John Peel compering, the show was a success, and international fame followed.

Initially a part-time hobby, success changed the group's personnel. Purist fans accused them of selling out, but signed to Island Records on the back of the Albert Hall concert, Moloney was unfazed and regained credibility with his recruitment of the revered flute player Matt Molloy. The Chieftains toured the world, wrote film themes, and took Irish music into hitherto unexplored areas with a succession of boldly themed albums.

A key breakthrough occurred when Van Morrison joined them on *Irish Heartbeat* (1988), while *Another Country* (1992) featured Emmylou Harris, Chet Atkins and Willie Nelson. Elvis Costello, Jackson Browne and Rickie Lee Jones guested on the 1991 Christmas album *The Bells Of Dublin*, and The Chieftains' greatest commercial breakthrough came in 1995 with *The Long Black Veil*. Their last album, *Voice Of Ages*, in 2012 involved Bon Iver, The Decemberists and a flute tune played in outer space by the astronaut Cady Coleman.

"Paddy almost singlehandedly brought Irish traditional music to the world stage," said Emmylou Harris. "His passion and energy were something to behold and he was a joy to be around in the studio… and the pub."

Colin Irwin

Getty

"He single-handedly brought Irish traditional music to the world stage."
EMMYLOU HARRIS

Dr Lonnie Smith

Jazz Hammond flame-keeper

BORN 1942

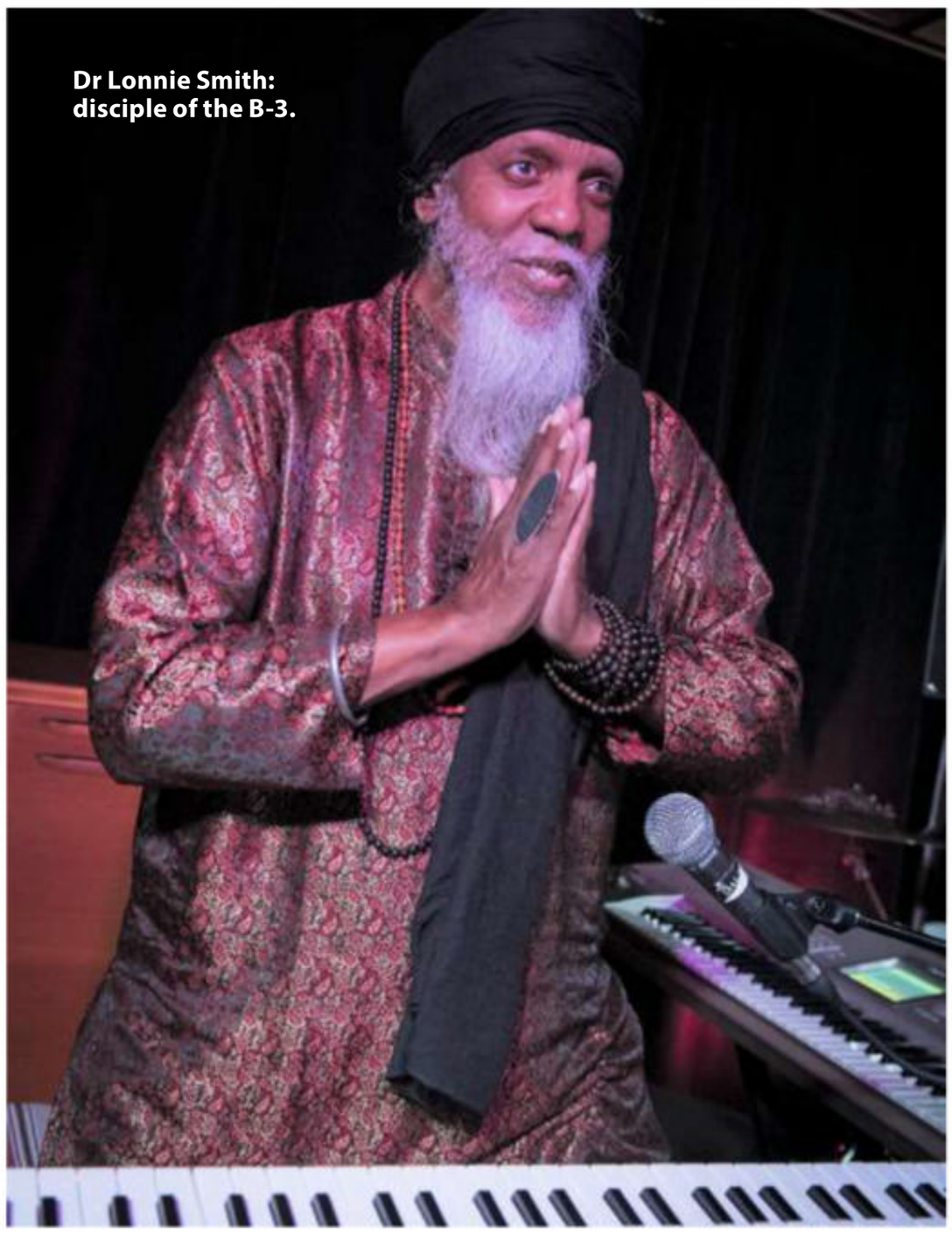
Cutting an exotic, almost mystical figure with his title and turban (both self-mythologising stylings), Lonnie Smith was a deft, soulful organist in the 1960s who expanded into a range of textural, atmospheric fusions as the decades progressed, latterly returning to a dramatic soul-jazz style, becoming a Rare Groove hero along the way.

Born in Buffalo, NY, Smith was originally a singer and a self-taught pianist. He was gifted his first Hammond organ by a local music store owner in the mid-1960s, and a year later joined George Benson's group, appearing on the guitarist's remarkable Columbia albums *It's Uptown* (1966) and *The George Benson Cookbook* (1967). As a leader he produced four increasingly funky albums for Blue Note in the years 1968-70 and supported saxophonist Lou Donaldson on a further four from 1967 to 1970.

The '70s and '80s saw Smith transfer his bluesy modal approach to Fender Rhodes on dance-oriented crossover releases (notably on *Keep On Lovin'* from 1976), but he returned to organ in the 1990s for a series of muscular, substantial groove albums, sometimes in tribute to other musicians (John Coltrane, Beck), often in the company of heavyweight collaborators (Joe Lovano, Peter Bernstein). A series of fine albums in the 2000s on Palmetto, his own Pilgrimage label, and finally in 2016 a return to Blue Note cemented his position as a capacious groove-jazz auteur. One of his last releases was a cover of Donovan's Sunshine Superman with Iggy Pop on vocals.

A hugely expressive player with a penchant for drama, texture and dynamics, Smith was the last survivor of classic soul-jazz who remained true to the Hammond B-3 organ. "It's like a marriage," he said, "it's like a fire, it's electricity that goes through my body… It has all the elements, the rain, the storm, the sun, the moon, the earth, the water, it has everything."

Chris Ingham



Dr Lonnie Smith: disciple of the B-3.

Camera Press (2), Alamy, courtesy DNA-Music

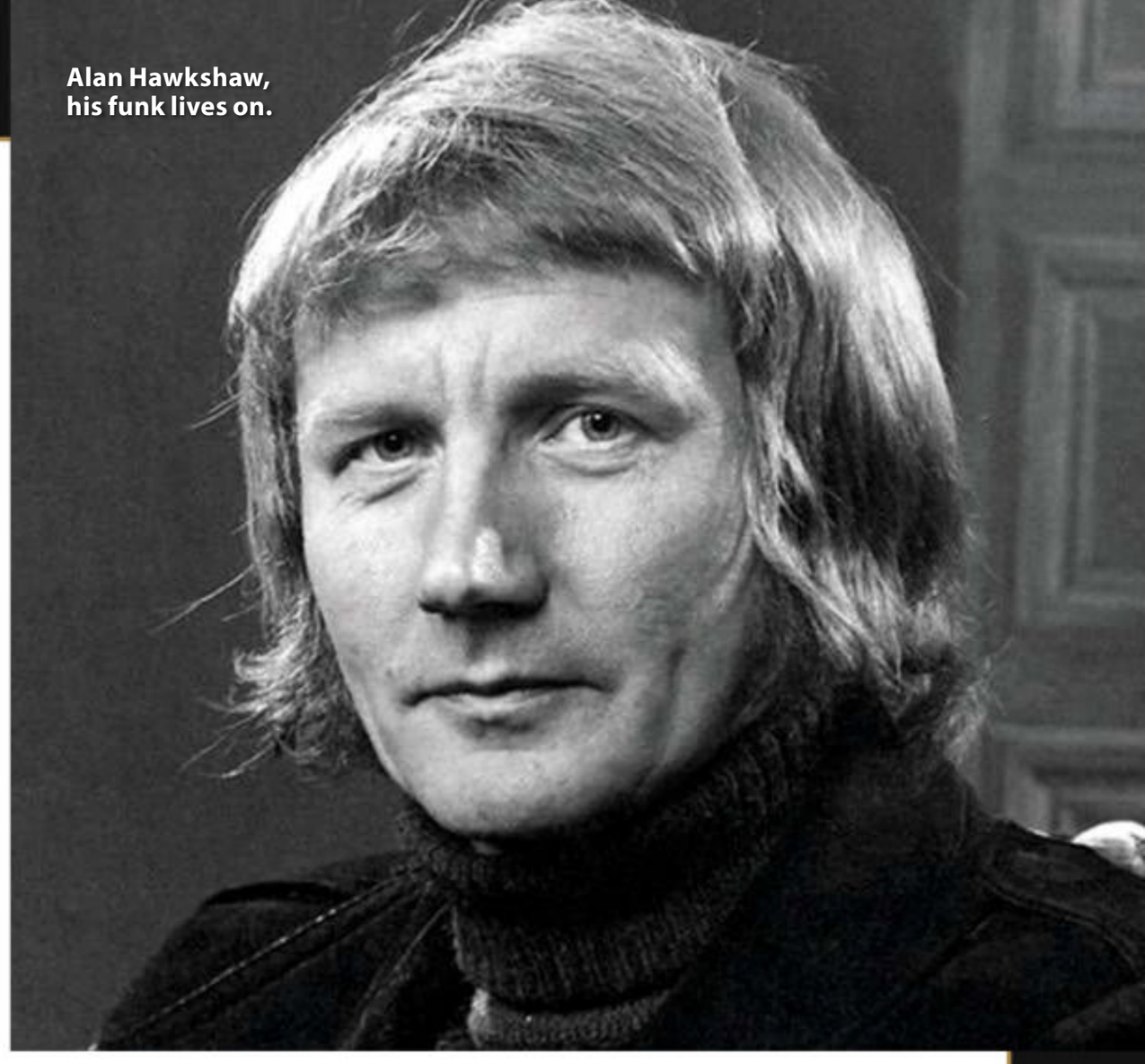
Ron Tutt

TCB band drummer

BORN 1938

Ron Tutt, who has died aged 83, laid down the formidable beat behind Elvis for the last nine years of Presley's career as part of the TCB band, showcased in films such as That's The Way It Is and Elvis On Tour, and appearing live to hundreds of millions on the 1973 Aloha From Hawaii TV broadcast. Born in Dallas, Texas, Tutt switched to drums after a childhood learning tap-dancing, guitar and then trumpet. Working for a jingle company in Memphis in 1969, he auditioned for Presley and his world changed. Always in demand thereafter, he brought his skill and subtlety to records by Gram Parsons, Johnny Cash, Jerry Garcia, Billy Joel, Emmylou Harris, Elvis Costello and numerous others. Neil Diamond's regular drummer since 1981, Tutt also backed Roy Orbison on the 1987 Black & White Night special.

Max Décharné



Alan Hawkshaw, his funk lives on.

The Jazz Butcher

Gentleman adventurer

BORN 1957

Pat Fish announced himself as a singular talent with 1983 debut *In Bath Of Bacon*, summoning zombies, sasquatches and "sex engines" over outrageous lifts from Wilson Pickett, The Bar-Kays and The Normal. The Londoner proved a fiercely literate talent over three more albums partly defined by the Wes Montgomery filigree of guitarist Max Eider. Four years of heavy touring (and drinking) made them US college radio favourites. But when Eider split in 1987, Fish went deeper, issuing intricately layered, sample-detailed LPs for Creation that revealed a one-off animist songwriter, capable of gentle mirth and gut-wrenching sadness. A committed prole and erudite raconteur, Fish had just completed 13th LP *The Highest In The Land* when he died peacefully at home, two days after ill health forced the cancellation of a live Facebook show.

Andy Cowan

"Alan Hawkshaw recalled playing on more than 7,000 dates."

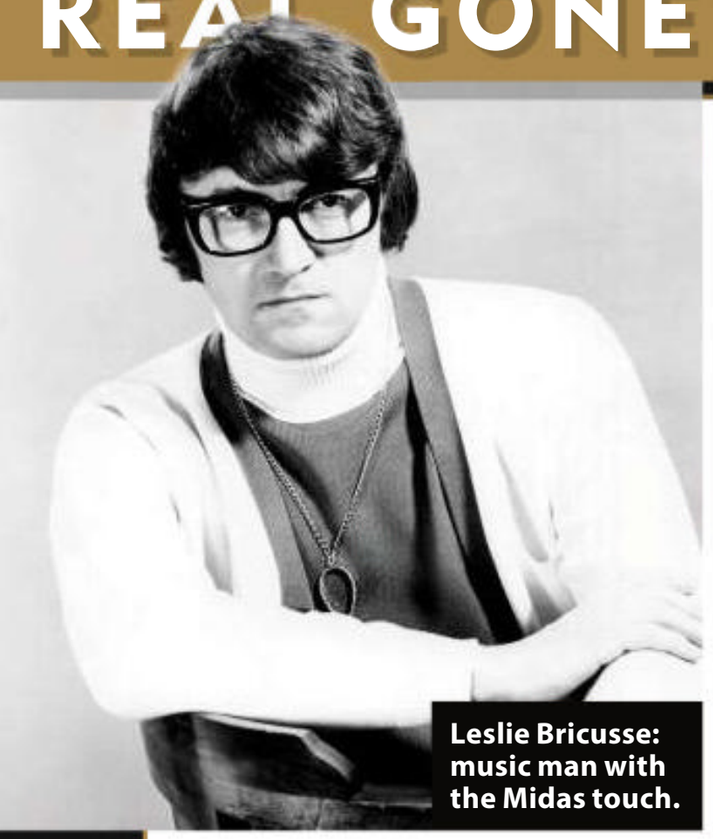
Alan Hawkshaw

Library Music king

BORN 1937

Born in Leeds, keyboardist Alan Hawkshaw joined Emile Ford And The Checkmates in 1960. Later in the decade he went to work at library music label KPM, and then Bruton and De Wolfe. There he produced funky, Hammond organ-driven rock sounds and beyond to order, and years later crate-diggers would discover LPs including *The Big Beat*, *Synthesizer And Percussion* and *The Champ* by The Mohawks (the latter found an afterlife as a cornerstone of hip-hop sampling). As a sessioneer Hawkshaw recalled playing on more than 7,000 dates, his clients including David Bowie, The Shadows, Donna Summer, Catherine Deneuve, Serge Gainsbourg, Jane Birkin, Shirley Bassey and Olivia Newton-John. He also wrote for the screen, becoming quietly ubiquitous on British TV for themes including Grange Hill, Channel 4 News, Dave Allen At Large, Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World, literacy awareness-raiser On The Move and the Countdown jingle, which he later revealed he had written on the toilet. He also wrote (with David Soames) Cold War romance musical Across The Wall, had disco success with Love De-Luxe, founded the Alan Hawkshaw Foundation for under-privileged music students in Leeds, wrote 2011 memoir The Champ: The Hawk Talks, and played dates with the KPM All Stars big band. In 2016 he also reunited with fellow library music big guns for the *KPM 1000* project, contributing the irrefutable The Funk Lives On.

Ian Harrison



Leslie Bricusse: music man with the Midas touch.

Leslie Bricusse

Feelgood songsmith

BORN 1931

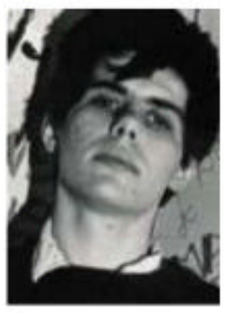
If his 2006 autobiography The Music Man is to be believed, Leslie Bricusse, British writer of songs for stage and screen, lived a charmed life full of success and the pursuit of pleasure – food, wine and luxury travel – surrounded by people he adored. Love of life shone out of his work, not least his lyric for Feelin' Good (1964), one of many songs co-written with Anthony Newley (and curiously unmentioned in the first edition of his book), which became a modern standard long after it was written, with Nina Simone's definitive 1965 version followed by hit revivals by the likes of Muse (2001) and Michael Bublé (2005). Unusually, the Pinner-born Bricusse wrote both music and lyrics in collaboration, but also wrote alone, notably on 1967 film musical Doctor Dolittle. His other classics include Pure Imagination and The Candy Man from Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory, Bond themes Goldfinger and You Only Live Twice, and the frequently covered If I Ruled The World.

Jim Irvin

Dee Pop

NY post-punk's funky drummer

BORN 1956



Born Dimitri Papadopoulos and raised in Forest Hills, Queens, Dee Pop brought clipped funk rhythms to downtown New York's post-punk no wave scene as drummer with the Bush Tetras. Formed in 1979, the band were favourites on the Mudd Club-CBGB circuit, releasing singles including 1980's Too Many Creeps, '81's Things That Go Boom In The Night and the Topper Headon-produced Rituals EP, which included ironically-titled signature track Can't Be Funky. Leaving in 1983, Pop played with The Gun Club, Jayne County, Richard Lloyd, Michael Karoli, Band Of Outsiders, Eddie Gale, Billy Bang, Radio I-Ching and Freedomland, joining the reformed Tetras in 1995 until succumbing to heart failure at his Brooklyn home on October 6. Bandmates Cynthia Sley and Pat Place said: "The band meant everything to him. He was an amazing drummer. We'll miss him daily."

Kris Needs

Everett Morton

Bringer of The Beat

BORN 1950

Born in St Kitts, Everett Morton moved to the England in 1965, and played drums in reggae and soul bands in Handsworth, Birmingham. In 1978, with his mother Leila accompanying him to early rehearsals, he joined multiracial ska band The Beat, soon introducing them to masterful sax elder Lionel 'Saxa' Martin. When Morton's spin on the reggae 'Steppers' rhythm met post-punk nervous energy,

Beat bros: Everett Morton (right) with Ranking Roger.

a sublime musical cross-pollination resulted. "I'd have to follow them, they were going so fast," he told me. "Then I had to take control. They started following me and it fell into place." From 1979 to 1983 the drummer would drive seven Top 30 singles and two Top 5 LPs, including 1980's faultless debut *I Just Can't Stop It*. After the group's unfortunate split in 1983, he briefly joined successor band Fine Young Cannibals, played with Saxa in The International Beat, reunited with Ranking Roger in the UK-based line-up of the group, joined the band's 2003 reunion at the Royal Festival Hall, and led his own formation, The Beat Goes Bang.

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

M.D., trumpeter and trombonist **JOHN ROSSALL** (below, b.c.1946) spent the '60s in the **Mike Leander Showband** and the **Boston Show Band**, who later changed their name to **The Glitter Band** and became the backing group for disgraced sex offender singer Paul Gadd in 1973. The same year they began releasing their own material, with Rossall co-write Angel Face hitting Number 4 in April 1974. He went solo in 1975, and was later threatened with legal sanctions over the disputed Glitter Band name. In 2020, with help from The Nightingales and others, Rossall released his farewell album *The Last Glam In Town*.

JAMAICA-BORN singer/guitarist/songwriter **DELBERT 'NGONI' McKAY** (b.c.1954) was a founder member of Southall reggae institutions **Misty In Roots**, Rock Against Racism stalwarts who popularised UK reggae with albums including *Live At The Counter-Eurovision '79*. The group, running their own People Unite label and self-help organisation, had an active '80s, releasing four albums and playing behind the Iron Curtain and in Africa. McKay also appeared on record with **The Ruts**, wrote John Peel favourite Own Them Control Them, and was a devout Rastafarian.

GUITARIST **DARRELL BATH** (b.c.1967) collaborated with **Ian Hunter** from 1994 to 2000, appearing on *Dirty Laundry* and *The Artful Dodger*. He also worked with **UK Subs**, **Dogs D'Amour**, **The Vibrators**, **The Crybabys**, **The Godfathers**, **Splodgenessabounds**, **Medicine Head**, **Nikki Sudden**, **The Dave Kusworth Group**, and **Die Toten Hosen**. He also recorded solo LPs including 2002's *Love And Hurt*. "If the Stones had ever lost Keef," said Hunter in tribute, "Darrell would have fitted like a glove."

SINGER **JIM PEMBROKE** (right, b.1946) moved from London to Finland in 1965 in pursuit of romance. He joined Helsinki rockers **Blues Section** in 1967. The following year they evolved into progressive outfit **Wigwam**, who debuted with *Hard N' Horny* in 1969. After moving in a more commercial direction with 1975's Finnish Number 1 *Nuclear Nightclub* – the year they headlined a free concert in Hyde Park – the group went on hiatus in 1978. Pembroke led his own band and co-composed Finland's Eurovision Song Contest entries in 1981 and 1982, then rejoined the reformed Wigwam, most recently for a 50th anniversary tour.

ARRANGER and composer **RALPH CARMICHAEL** (b.1927) worked mainly in the Christian music genre, where he would be denounced as a heretic for introducing jazz and rock influences to hymnals. From the late '50s he would write for such TV shows as I Love Lucy and Bonanza, and for movies including The Blob and The Cross And The Switchblade. From 1960 he worked with **Nat 'King' Cole**, producing his celebrated LP *The Magic Of Christmas*. He also worked with **Ella Fitzgerald**, **Bing Crosby**, **Andraé Crouch** and more, while his song Reach Out To Jesus was recorded by Elvis in 1972.

CATALOGUE WIZARD **BOB FISHER** (b.1946) wrote for Let It Rock, Cream and NME before becoming Motown press officer in London in 1975, rising to Fantasy/Stax label manager. In 1987 he moved to Charly, using his expert catalogue knowledge to compile many fine LPs. Setting up the Sequel label at Castle in 1989, he also established the Westside, Blueside and Acrobat imprints. Working more recently for Cherry Red, Fisher died of a heart attack on October 7.

VIOLA player **KENNETH ESSEX** (b.1920) served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, later playing with numerous prestigious symphony orchestras in the capital. In 1965 he was part of the string quartet which played on **The Beatles**' Yesterday. He also played at various Royal Variety Performances and Eurovision Song Contests, including Abba's victorious year in 1974, while his other credits include the theme to Fawlty Towers. During 2020's pandemic, as he turned 100, he staged charitable sponsored walks.

NICKNAMED 'THE VOICE', **JAY BLACK** (below, b.1938) was the second 'Jay' in Queens hitmakers **Jay & The Americans**, replacing John Traynor in 1962. The group would have hits until 1970, with Black singing on US Top 10s Come A Little Bit Closer, Cara Mia and This Magic Moment. After 1973's split, he continued using the band name, but was forced to sell it in 2006 after accruing enormous gambling debts, whereupon his ex-bandmates recruited a third 'Jay'. Black played his last solo show in 2017.

FRONTMAN **GREG GILBERT** (b.1977) formed indie rockers **Delays** with his brother Aaron in Southampton. His falsetto voice was heard on 2004's Top 20 LP *Faded Seaside Glamour*, while songs from 2006's *You See Colours* accompanied Match Of The Day highlights. Diagnosed with cancer in 2016, he documented his illness in poetry and art, with his photorealist biro drawings presented at a Da Vinci exhibition at Southampton City Art Gallery in 2019.

Clive Prior, Geoff Brown and Ian Harrison

Adrian Boot/urbanimage.tv, Getty (3)

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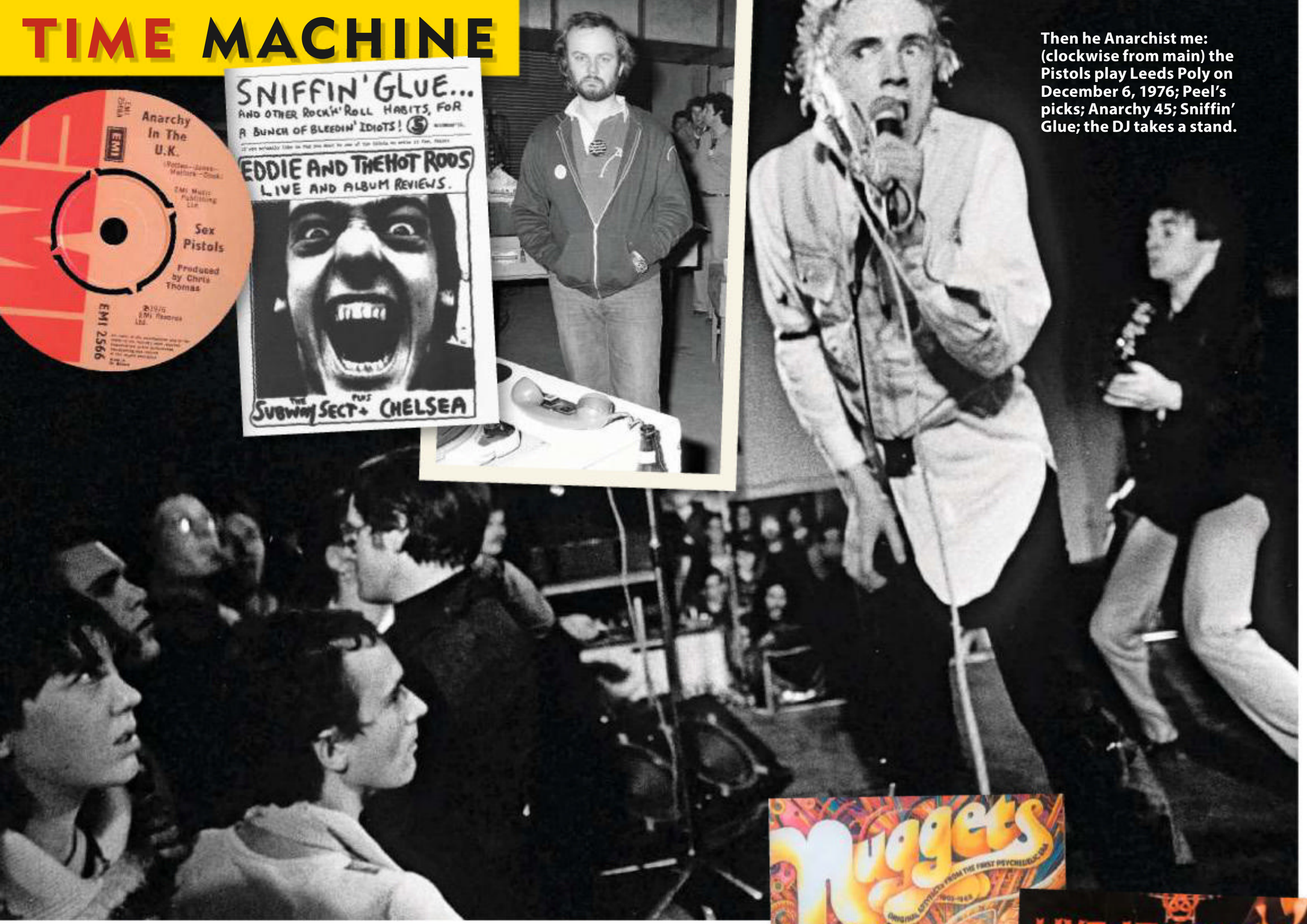
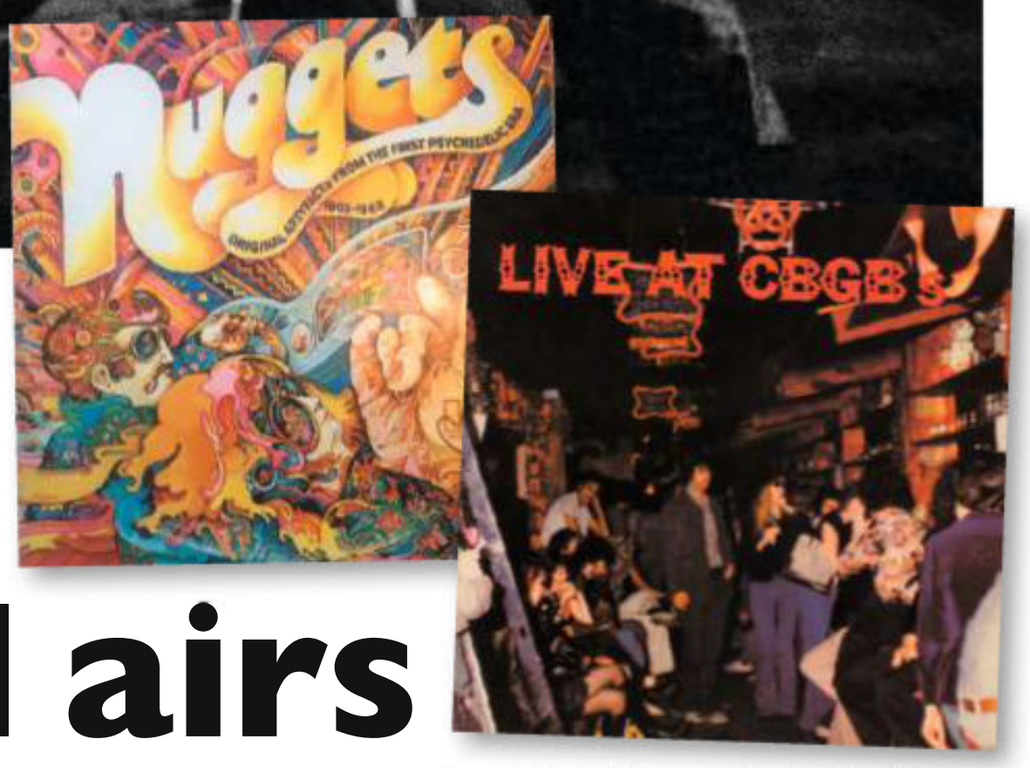


Then he Anarchist me: (clockwise from main) the Pistols play Leeds Poly on December 6, 1976; Peel's picks; Anarchy 45; Sniffin' Glue; the DJ takes a stand.



DECEMBER 1976

John Peel's Punk Special airs

DECEMBER 10 This Friday night, the Sex Pistols were meant to be playing Lancaster University's student union. On paper, they were a week into their Anarchy In The UK tour with Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers and The Clash (co-headliners The Damned had already been kicked off the tour before playing a single gig). But like all but three of the nationwide trek's initial dates, tonight's show had been cancelled.

Why? Try the group's fabled appearance on ITV's London area news show Today on December 1, when interviewer Bill Grundy unwittingly provoked the Pistols to use such *verboten* TV words as "shit", "bastard" and "fucking rotter". Shocking the tea-time audience, after just four minutes the Pistols were national hate figures, condemned as harbingers of nothing less than societal collapse. After the Today show, the band had gone back to their rehearsal space at the Roxy Theatre in Harlesden, where manager Terry Collins sent them packing. As well as graffiti – 'Bill Grundy Is A Wanker' was one, legend says – the manager added they, "left the lavatory in a dreadful state with a broken mirror."

In terms of punk and how it was seen, there were also altered reflections on December 10's John Peel radio show. Encouraged by angry letters from longhaired listeners, he'd been playing selections from the first Ramones album since May, and debut 45s by The Damned and Pistols as soon as they were available. But tonight, from 11pm on BBC Radio 1, he devoted the entire show to the savage new music in a programme later dubbed the Punk Special.

"Tonight, we are going to have a look at punk rock," said Peel in his introduction. "Mind you, no two people seem to be able to agree on exactly what punk rock is."

Luckily for punk-hungry listeners across the nation, his was a savvy, connoisseur's overview rather than the swearing and gobbing mainstream take now convulsing the tabloids. For those dismayed by cancelled tour dates, there were four speedy tracks from a November 30 Damned session and the debut Sex Pistols 45 Anarchy In The UK (described, superbly, as "a good old stomper" and bound for a Number 38 chart placing on December 18). From the US there were urgent '76 sounds from the Ramones, Richard Hell & The Voidoids and Pere Ubu, plus Television's Little Johnny Jewel from '75. From 1973, earlier punk frenzies were represented by Iggy & The Stooges and the New York Dolls, whose Personality Crisis was, says Peel, "considered highly influential by some authorities". The attitudinal link to '60s garage snot was accentuated further with tracks by The Shadows Of Knight and The Seeds: before playing the latter's Pushin' Too Hard, Peel observed they were "a band that I used to hang around with in California in the '60s… they seem to be fairly crucial to the punk movement."

Other acts would earn a less secure place in the firmament. Pub rock chart act Eddie & The Hotrods' Horseplay (Weary Of The Schmaltz) were justified with the words, "they're on the front of the current issue of Sniffin' Glue and that's good enough for me." Taste has also largely forgotten the rushing Farfisa confection of Boys Will Be Boys by New York glam punks The Fast, who later morphed into Hi-NRG chart act Man To Man, while sicko-boogie Slash by CBGB regulars Tuff

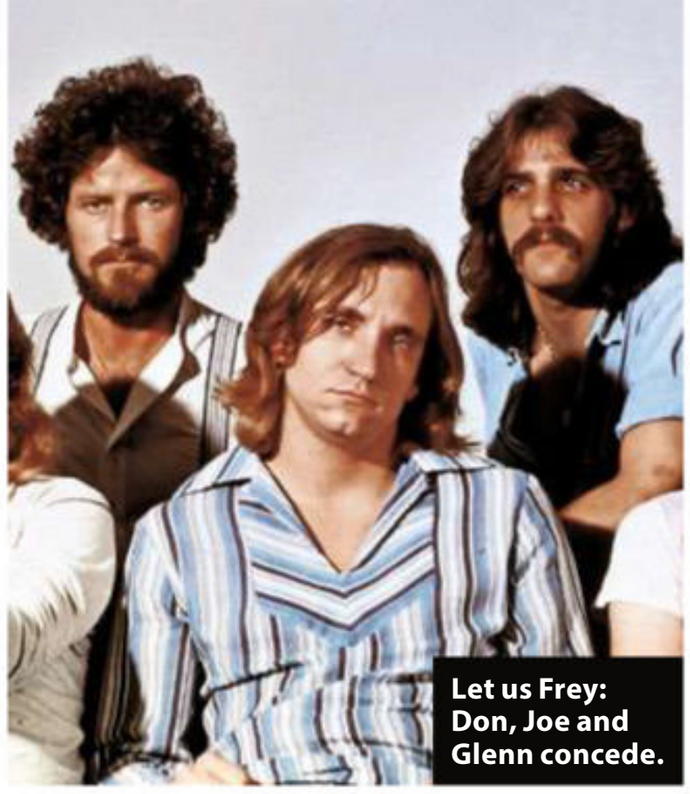
> **"No two people seem to agree on exactly what punk rock is."**
> **JOHN PEEL**

Darts! suffers from association with the group's even-more-unsavoury debut LP, made after the departure of vocalist Robert Gordon. Coming out of Australia, The Saints' undying (I'm) Stranded is declared 'Peel's Big 45', the must-own song of the show, though recent music paper ads by Rough Trade apologised for its scant availability.

"I'm not about to dress up as a punk, or change my hairstyle or anything," said the 37-year-old Peel in closing, "but I'm very grateful to the bands and the people who make the music, or most of them anyway, for the excitement and heated debate and general bewilderment they've brought back to the rock scene."

The revolution wasn't immediate, of course. This month the music weeklies remained content to put Elton John and Joan Armatrading on the cover, and Peel was happy to play Jackson Browne, Pink Floyd and Ralph McTell on the following week's shows. Yet, as punk went overground and the regions embraced it, the Punk Special was a reminder of how it began and where it could go. There was excitement coming in '77, as the Pistols released *Never Mind The Bollocks* and The Clash, The Damned and the rest broke through. As he lined up sessions for The Adverts, The Jam and The Stranglers, Peel would do his bit to ensure the virus kept on mutating. As he observed, shortly before going to see Generation X at the newly-opened Roxy in Covent Garden in January '77: "There's life in the old bastard yet."

Ian Harrison



Let us Frey: Don, Joe and Glenn concede.

Eagles Check In

DECEMBER 11 **Eagles' fifth LP *Hotel California*, their first with guitarist Joe Walsh, is released. It charts at Number 4 in the US, entering the UK charts at Number 5 in Christmas week. Having fit recording around tours of the US, Japan and Australia, on December 11 vocalist/guitarist Glenn Frey tells Melody Maker the group have been together without a break for 11 months: "It's a pain in the ass… your life is not your own any more but that's a concession I'm willing to make." Its famous, enigmatic title track – "It's the Bicentennial Year, and this is our Bicentennial statement," says singer-drummer Don Henley – will hit US Number 1 in July: to date, the LP is certified 26-times platinum in America alone.**

Back by soap demand: Rose Royce; (inset) movie scene.

ROSE ROYCE AT THE CAR WASH

DECEMBER 8 Rose Royce's disco classic Car Wash enters the US Top 40 at 22. It's the theme to Michael Schultz's minimum wage comedy-satire Car Wash, starring Richard Pryor, The Pointer Sisters, George Carlin, Antonio Fargas and more. The film's Grammy-winning OST was scored by ex-Motown man Norman Whitfield, who worked from a basic script while the film was being produced: guitarist/voice Kenji Brown tells Blues & Soul, "the group had never actually seen the movie until the night of the premiere." Lead singer Gwen Dickey declares it, "the perfect mixture of comedy and seriousness." The single hits US Number 1 in January and UK Number 9 in February and the group score six more British hits before Dickey goes solo in 1980.

ALSO ON!

MARLEY SHOT

3 **Bob Marley** (above) is shot twice when seven men invade his Kingston home. The political rivalries surrounding the Smile Jamaica Concert two days later are blamed; injured, Marley plays anyway, but leaves for Nassau after.

ROD RULES

4 **Rod Stewart**'s Tonight's The Night (Gonna Be Alright) spends its fourth week at US Number 1. Tonight, Rod plays Leicester's Granby Halls.

BAH, HAMBURG

11 It's reported that a December 1962 tape of **The Beatles** at Hamburg's Star-Club is being readied for release via the Double H Licensing Corporation.

FALSE HOLSTS?

18 The estate of **Gustav Holst** declare themselves unhappy with electronic versions of the composer's 1918 suite The Planets by **Patrick Gleeson** and **Isao Tomita**. The two albums are released as planned.

PATTI PARTIES

31 **Patti Smith** welcomes the New Year at the New York Palladium with **David Johansen**, **Tom Verlaine**, **Dee Dee Ramone** and **John Cale**. Earlier in the month she hung out with **Luciano Pavarotti** in Chicago, while November saw her duet with **Bruce Springsteen** at The Bottom Line in Greenwich Village.

TOP TEN

UK ALBUMS DECEMBER 5

1 **GLEN CAMPBELL'S 20 GOLDEN GREATS** GLEN CAMPBELL CAPITOL

2 **ARRIVAL** ABBA EPIC

3 **22 GOLDEN GUITAR GREATS** BERT WEEDON WARWICK

4 **GREATEST HITS** FRANKIE VALLI & THE 4 SEASONS K-TEL

5 **100 GOLDEN GREATS** MAX BYGRAVES RONCO

6 **SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE** STEVIE WONDER MOTOWN

7 **DISCO ROCKET** VARIOUS K-TEL

8 **GREATEST HITS** ABBA EPIC

9 **20 ORIGINAL DEAN MARTIN HITS** DEAN MARTIN REPRISE

10 **A NEW WORLD RECORD** ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA JET

Bert's so good: Weedon at Number 3.

AD ARCHIVE 1976

Do you want to be (and we quote) "Young, hip, light and sexy?" Get yourself a jump suit! (Fireman's pole hairy model's own).

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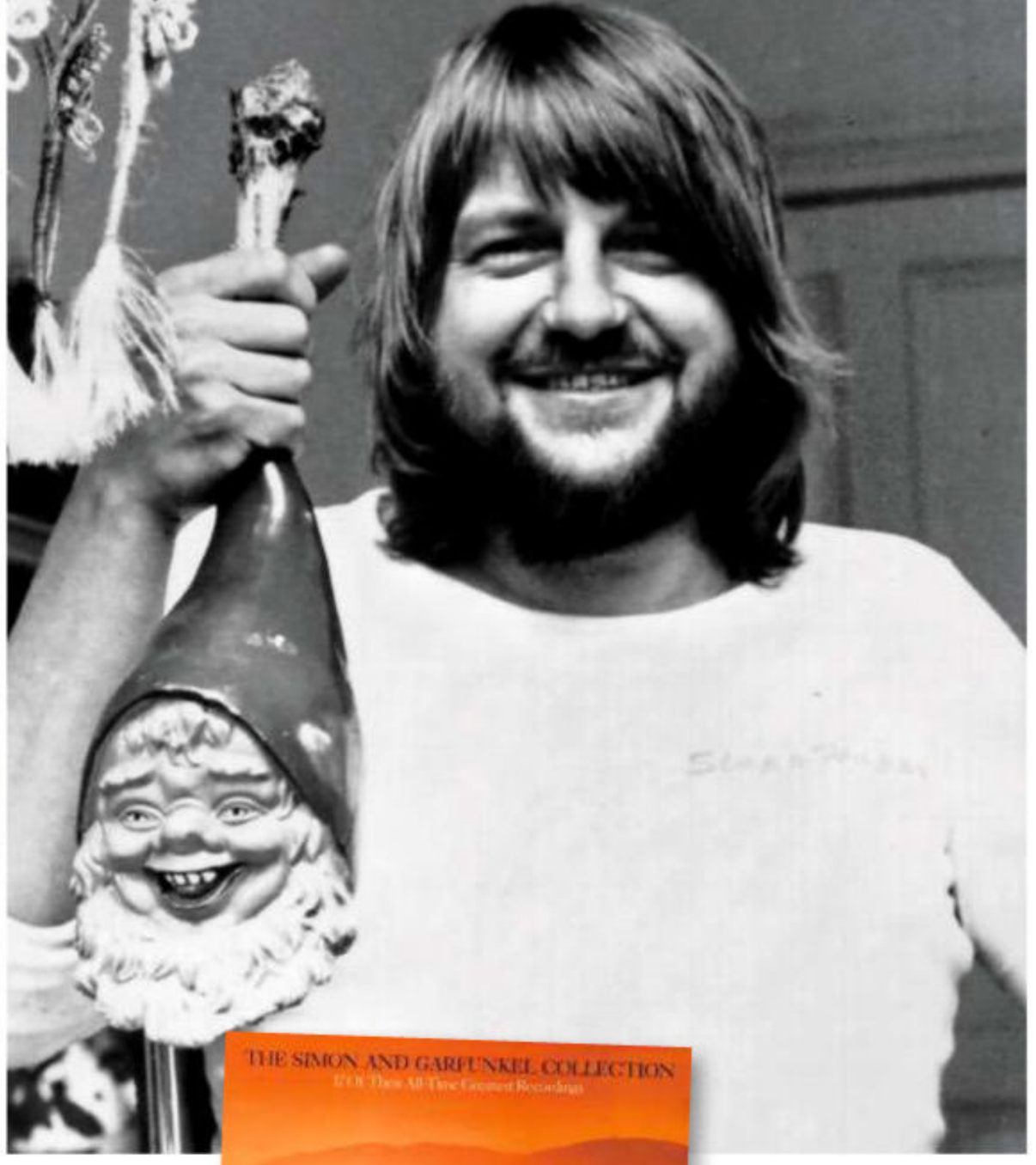

Where are the female producers?

Let us answer the nagging musical questions and enigmas that haunt you (feel free to chip in, of course).

Women are gaining greater recognition these days as film directors, but perversely, I don't know of any female record producers. There must have been some, can you please enlighten me?

Stephen Davies, via e-mail

MOJO says: Ethel Gabriel is often hailed as the first major label female producer, and helmed an estimated 2,500 records in her career, including Perez Prado's 1955 smash recording Cherry Pink And Apple Blossom White. Other eminent examples include Sonia Pottinger, who spent 20 years producing such reggae stars as Phyllis Dillon, Ken Boothe and Culture; Sugar Hill Records founder Sylvia Robinson, who had production and co-production credits on rap landmarks Rapper's Delight, The Message and White Lines (Don't Do It); Sylvia Massy, who's produced Tool, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Babes In Toyland, among others; Helen Keane, who produced Bill Evans from 1966 until his death; and engineer and producer Betty Cantor (one half of the 'Bob And Betty' engineering duo with Bob Matthews), who's credited on Grateful Dead-and-associated albums from 1968 to 1982, and also the famous 'Betty Boards' live tapes beloved of Deadheads. Women artists who self-produce include Joni Mitchell, Kate Bush and Natalie Merchant, and we should also mention such experimental composers as Delia Derbyshire, Suzanne Ciani and Laurie Spiegel, whose piece Harmonices Mundi appeared on the golden record aboard NASA's Voyager 1 spacecraft and is currently more than 14 billion miles from Earth. We could go on and on – this year's John Grant album *Boy From Michigan* was produced by Cate Le Bon – so let us know your suggestions, too!

ULTIMA YULE

Somewhere within the piles of old magazines my wife can't understand why I keep, there is a black and white photograph. The musicians in this photograph include Marc Bolan, Rod Stewart, Robert Wyatt, and Ivor Cutler, and members of bands who were friends at the time of John Peel. They are gathered around microphones singing Christmas carols. But what carols did they sing?

Gareth Toms, Portsmouth

MOJO says: Broadcast on Boxing Day, 1970, The Top Gear Carol Singers offered solo and mob-handed takes on Silent Night, God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, Away In A Manger, Good King Wenceslas and Oh Come All Ye Faithful. It's appeared since on various Radio 6 Music shows, and floats free and festively on the web to this day.

ROCK'S WEIRDEST BILLS – REVISITED

The Roundhouse in Chalk Farm used to serve up strange bills of a Sunday on a regular basis. The most disparate I recall was in 1976 when I went to see Man-offshoot Alkatraz. All very tuneful and West Coast-ish. They were followed by Isotope, whose noodly and cerebral jazz-rock I found inaccessible. The bill then executed a screeching handbrake turn to bring on the evening's main attraction, Judas Priest. A year or two later at the same venue, I saw the early Split Enz, in their weird hairdo days, supported by proto-Oi! punk band Menace.

Francis Mansell

MOJO says; Thanks also to Roy Freeman for his memories of seeing "the endearingly ramshackle Johnny Moped… booed on to the stage" when supporting Motörhead, Jayne Morris's report on Tommy Cooper with The Police in a circus tent on Tooting Bec Common ("it was lashing down, mud everywhere") and Nick Boorman on Max Wall supporting Ian Dury at Hammersmith Odeon and getting booed. "[Dury] came on and told the crowd that Max Wall was a genius and had more talent in his little finger than he did and they should listen to his act," he writes. "With that Ian walked off and Max continued his stint to great applause." Keep 'em coming, please!

Mixing In Action (clockwise from main): audio controller Kate Bush; carol-singing carouser Robert Wyatt and friend; bogus strollers Simon And Garfunkel?; Dury's hero Max Wall; the notorious Velvets/Faust fruit.

NANA FROM HEAVEN

After the Faust feature in MOJO 335 I was reminded of an old acquaintance who, before eating a banana, would quote the Faust song No Harm's words, "Daddy! Take the banana! Tomorrow is Sunday!" He also claimed the fruit reference was a nod to the sleeve of the first Velvet Underground album. Is this true?

Simon Lloyd, via e-mail

MOJO says: Faust's Jean-Hervé Péron can solve the riddle. "The Velvet Underground were loved in Germany by everybody, but there is no relationship between 'Daddy take your banana' (sic) and The Velvet Underground," he says. "You know a banana of course is a phallic symbol. So I guess it always pops up, all the time."

HELP MOJO

I heard an incredible bit of trivia concerning the album cover of 1981's *The Simon And Garfunkel Collection*. The titular duo taking a stroll on the beach was actually two lookalikes. Paul and Art were purportedly not on speaking terms and the record company couldn't get them together. I'd love to know if this is true or not.

Paul Speed, Grimsby

MOJO says: It looks like you may be right Paul. But does anyone know who these Paul'n'Art-a-likes were? And who else got a lookalike for their record sleeve?

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (3), Alamy

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Worth £1,799, we have one up for grabs. Get galvanised and fill in acrostic mind-bender Michael Jones' crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 338 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered.

Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **January 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

www.cambridgeaudio.com

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

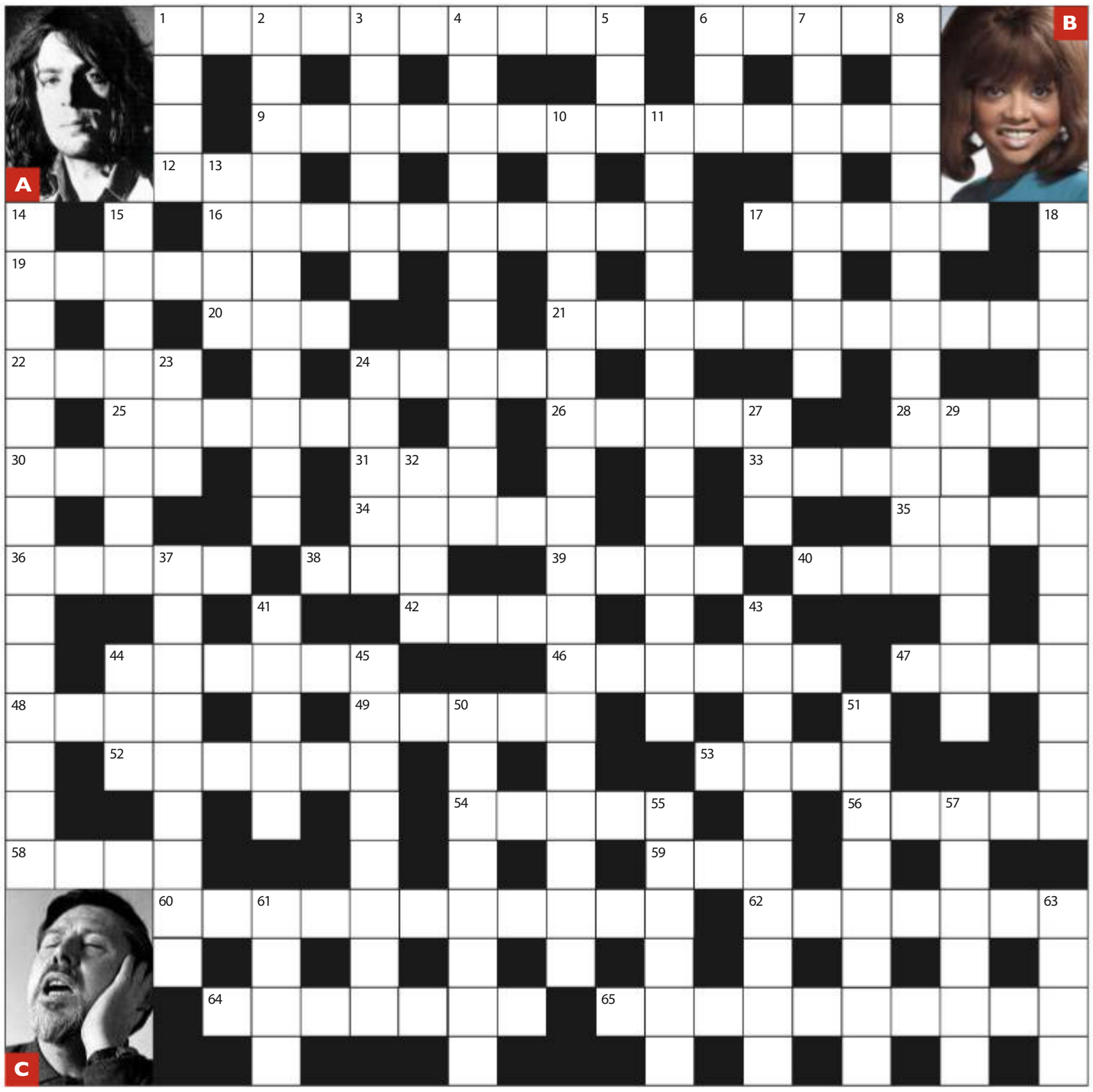
ANSWERS

MOJO 336

Across: 1 Prince Buster, 9 Irish, 10 Lonnie, 11 Grill, 13 Zombie, 15 Neon Bible, 16 Beck, 19 INXS, 21 Top, 23 Red, 24 Team, 25 Hanoi Rocks, 27 Bill, 28 Mice, 29 You're, 30 Bono, 31 Adams, 33 Nude, 36 Robeson, 37 Nils Lofgren, 39 Leeds, 41 Meek, 42 Step, 44 Rising, 45 Pigs On The Wing, 46 Noonday, 48 Courteeners, 49 One, 51 Slippy, 52 Kent, 54 East, 56 Idles, 57 Doc, 58 I Do, 61 Shellac, 62 Gonna Miss Me, 63 End.

Down: 1 Peggy Seeger, 2 It Ain't Me Babe, 3 Cellophane Symphony, 4 Bang Bang, 5 Shipbuilding, 6 Rilo, 7 Limbo, 8 Phoebe Bridgers, 12 Leo, 13 Zero, 14 Simmons, 17 Edie, 18 Kiley, 20 XTC, 22 Sky, 26 Sorrow, 32 Sister Morphine, 34 Underworld, 35 Seventeen, 38 Get It On, 40 Deserter's, 42 Signals, 43 Angels, 44 Roddy, 47 Yoko, 50 Necks, 51 Serge, 53 Times, 55 Talk, 56 I Ran, 59 Dan, 60 OMD.

Winner: David Sidney of **Treharris**, wins a pair of Q Active 200 speakers with Google Cast.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (3,7)
6 Catspaw man's link to glam rockers (5)
9 It's his freewheelin' fantasy (3,6,5)
12 --- Davis, Mud guitarist who co-wrote Can't Get You Out Of My Head (3)
16 Mascis & Barlow & Murph (8,2)
17 Lead single from *Goats Head Soup* (5)
19 Several years of Duran Duran hits (6)
20 Costello's Aznavour cover (3)
21 Opener from Ron Sexsmith's second album (6,5)
22 Yes LP or half of Mark Hollis's band (4)
24 XTC song whose B-side was Dear God (5)
25 ------ *Moves* (Psychedelic Furs album) (6)
26 Mid-'80s hit for Randy Crawford (5)
28 "Anger is an energy" (PiL) (4)
30 Sonic ----, AKA Peter Kember (4)
31 All About ---, Martha's Harbour band (3)
33 Drummer Rick or singer Lily (5)
34 Julien, she brought us Little Oblivions (5)
35 Scottish singer – being shown Flesh? (4)
36 When Jools Holland is on (5)
38 Verlaine, Morello or Waits (3)
39 Phil, protest singer who released I Ain't Marching Any More (4)
40 Pepa's partner (4)
42 Claudia Lennear's 1973 solo album (4)
44 Alison, who is Robert Plant's collaborator on *Raise The Roof* (6)
46 Misfits man Glenn (6)
47 Worry about part of a guitar (4)
48 Bad song by Grinderman or Interpol (4)
49 Band founded by Rory Gallagher (5)
52 Matt Johnson's repeated article (3,3)
53 It's what love is if you're Ryan Adams (4)
54 Bryan, who released Boys And Girls (5)
56 Steve, original drummer for Wishbone Ash (5)
58 *Rage In* ---- (Ultravox album) (4)
59 Cassidy, who covered Fields Of Gold and Over The Rainbow (3)
60 See photoclue C (4,7)
62 Bowie album whose first words are "Watching them come and go" (7)
64 Chris, who performed the theme to Daniel Craig's first Bond film… (7)
65 …and a Mighty Sparrow song that's not from Sean Connery's first (2,6,2)

DOWN

1 Belly's debut (4)
2 She was born Angela Trimble (6,5)
3 Great Britain, as it appears in the songs of Babyshambles (6)
4 His famous set-up had a Fender Rhodes Bass on top of a Vox Continental (3,8)
5 How many storeys in the Stone Roses' love song (3)
6 --- Café, band who found that Every Day Hurts (3)
7 Where The Clash went from here (8)
8 See photoclue B (5,7)
10 Richard Thompson's follow-up to *Hand Of Kindness* (6,1,7,4)
11 Who Alison Goldfrapp is in love with on *Black Cherry* (6,7)
13 They go with The Who's *Sods* on a 1974 compilation (4)
14 Bobbie Gentry's first UK hit (3,2,6,3)
15 -------- & Butler, duo (8)
18 "The Devil came and took me/From bar to street to bookie" (Squeeze) (2,3,8)
23 Could be Deal, could be Gordon (3)
24 Subgenre popularised by PWEI (5)
27 Starkey, who played with Oasis on *Dig Out Your Soul* (3)
29 It features a Heart-Shaped Box (2,5)
32 Transvision ----, Wendy James' band (4)
37 Jazz legend who Basie called "the greatest piano player in the world" (4,5)
41 Name that links Mary O'Brien with ZZ Top (5)
43 Bunny Wailer's 1989 release (10)
44 This Is The ---, AKA Kate Stables (3)
45 Jim, producer for Meat Loaf and The Sisters Of Mercy (8)
50 Their forthcoming album is called *Happiness Not Included* (4,4)
51 Jazz label founded in 1939 (4,4)
55 Emma-Jean Thackray's colourful 2021 album (6)
57 When The ------ Broke Free (Pink Floyd) (6)
61 Antony And The Johnsons track – it goes on for ages (4)
63 "You're still a liar," sings Sinéad O'Connor at the end of this track (4)

HELLO GOODBYE

Westphalian rules: (clockwise from left) Jaki Liebezeit, Michael Karoli, Irmin Schmidt, Holger Czukay, Malcolm Mooney, David Johnson, Schloss Nörvenich, 1968.

Irmin Schmidt and Can

THE BEST OF 2021

It began in Cologne, creating something new. But did it ever really end?

HELLO AUTUMN 1967

Hello for me was the day we all met in our apartment on Hindemithweg in Cologne. It was pretty large, spacious enough that from time to time we could host friends.

I'd asked Holger [Czukay, bass] if he was interested in making a group, he said, "Yes, I'm very interested." He was teaching at a boarding school in Switzerland and he brought Michael [Karoli, guitar], who was his pupil. Surprisingly, Jaki [Liebezeit, drums] showed up too. He was the drummer of the most known, famous free jazz group in Germany [The Manfred Schoof Quintet] and I had asked him if he knew somebody who plays – my idea of a professional drummer was Max Roach kind of style. Jaki said, "Yes, I've found somebody, it's me."

All we had in common was that we were unsatisfied with our actual situation. Holger was in a remote, little provincial town, Michael had just started to study law, which he hated, and Jaki was frustrated in free jazz because a lot was forbidden, especially to play groove. I wanted to create something new, because I was unsatisfied with composing sort-of *new* music. Also, everyone had a deep interest in extra-European music, so we thought we would try it.

I found this room in a castle [Schloss Nörvenich] and we started recording and playing. At the very beginning, there was also [flautist] David Johnson joining, but then it turned out to get more and more into the direction of rock, then he left because he didn't like it. Then in [autumn] 1968, all of a sudden, Malcolm [Mooney, vocalist] appeared. Hildegarde [Irmin's wife] had met him in Paris and brought him to Cologne because I was in the art scene, and she said I could help him to get a gallery interested in him. Since I spent all day in our new-founded studio, I took him with me. We had already finished the piece Father Cannot Yell, purely instrumental, without David. Father Cannot Yell is a kind of piece, we thought, 'That's where we wanna go.' I brought Malcolm to the studio, when he listened to the piece we played to him, he just started to sing on it, so Holger set it up that he could dub on that, and that was the last step of Hello. From that moment actually, the direction was clear where we were going.

"It really hit me that they all were gone."
IRMIN SCHMIDT

GOODBYE EARLY 1979

Well, the first goodbye was when, in 1979, we decided to finish playing as Can and making concerts. But it's more difficult because there's no definite goodbye.

Throughout all the '80s and '90s, Michael and Jaki played on all my records, on all my film music. I mean, we still were very close. Michael was the closest. We were in constant contact, musically in contact.

Then came the first horrible goodbye, to Michael who died in [November] 2001. I was still in contact with Jaki. Actually, about three months before Jaki died [in January 2017], I was in his place, and we discussed a duet, acoustic piano with his drumming. We had an invitation to play in Mexico. It was very spontaneous, playing only a few times together then going. But then he died, which hit me really… so, I made the piano record, five piano pieces [*5 Klavierstücke*, 2018], and they have something in them. I was thinking I would've played things like this with Jaki. Now I'm alone. Somehow Jaki was present when I played this record, well, that sounds a little bit romantic maybe.

Then, shortly afterwards, Holger died [in September 2017]. Even though I had much less contact with Holger, I got very sick. I had a kind of breakdown. It really hit me that they all were gone. Then I think in the second piano record, the live record I performed [*Nocturne (Live At The Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival)*, 2020], on this record is a piece which I performed for the first time called Yonder, and in a way that is a way of saying goodbye to all of them. If you listen to it, you might've missed that, it's not explicit, it's not that I mean, "This is my goodbye", but there's something in it where they are in it.

Now, I am involved in curating Can live records and they are around me, they are still there, so there is no goodbye for me. It doesn't really end, because the experience of these 10 years, especially the first five years with these guys, sort of formed me as a musician more than everything else. They are still there, so, no goodbye. It will end when I have to say goodbye to the world, I think.

As told to Ian Harrison

Can's Live In Stuttgart 1975 is out now on Spoon/Mute. Can Live In Brighton 1975 is released on December 3.

Last Future Day: with Rosko Gee (second right); (left) Schmidt today.

Courtesy of Mute Records (2), Diane Zillmer

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